Welcome to the Terrordome: Race, Power and the Rise of American Rap Music, 1979-1995

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Abstract:

"Welcome to the Terrordome" examines how late twentieth century rappers used culture as a critical and politically useful battleground to unmask the modes and mechanisms of a persistent and haunting coloniality in the afterlives of American slavery. This dissertation contributes to a historical analysis on race, power and culture in the United States by investigating how Black rappers used their oppositional gaze to bring a repressed colonial subscript into unobstructed view and destabilize the prevalent master narratives of colorblindness, modernity and post-coloniality. To look was to understand and challenge power relations, as well as to be acknowledged as human. In their readings of America, rappers ruptured the seemingly closed and dehumanizing discourses of blackness while also revealing abusive systems of power that the state continually denied in everyday practices.

In the era of mass incarceration, rappers used Rap to embolden their consciousness and narrate to the American public how blackness was continuously framed as terrifying and simultaneously subjected to terror. In a period marked by post-industrial changes and intra-class division, Rap was profoundly shaped by the symptoms of the post-industrial city and shifting black communal sensibilities – all of which rendered visible the states of consciousness of a young, urban, racialized working and workless poor demographic. Rap's claims on power marked a historical period of disjuncture in that it was a democratizing musical form that provided a wide spectrum of participants with the ability to produce readings of how the textures of American democracy had contained, managed and restricted Black life chances.

"Welcome to the Terrordome" argues that rappers transformed dispositions of power by taking up persistent readings of the black body as weaponized and inverting the meanings and purposes of these narratives to disrupt the status quo. These Rap readings and performances

captured heightened states of consciousness for both the colonized and the colonizer which were rooted in the transformations brought about by enslavement and the afterlives of slavery. As rappers used their narratives to render the *terrorized* and *terrified* as discursive, unstable and unruly categories, they performed "terror" to vocalize their demands and undermine the myths of post-coloniality.

**This dissertation is dedicated to any rapper
who has used music to humanize their world.**

Acknowledgements/*One Day It'll All Make Sense*

In the opening interlude titled "Introspective" on the album *One Day It'll All Make Sense*, rapper Common captured how music has helped him make sense of his life's work:

What I want to do to you nah, really it's for you / Is open my mental window, hoping that you would climb in / Or if not, at least look in / I want to take you to places that I have been and to / The places that I want to go / I mean this music / It ain't all that I got, but it does mean a lot to me / I injected my whole being into it / And I've been doing it for a while.

In the pages of this dissertation I hope to take you on a journey that reflects my intellectual fascination with artistic expression, my life-long commitment to the soundtracks that have shaped the tones and timbres of my personal and professional journey, and the many communities that have supported the completion of this work.

First, a deep thanks to my supervisory committee who have seen this project take many forms. To my supervisor Michele A. Johnson, a woman who has thought through this dissertation with me and done so with tremendous generosity and care. I am grateful for all the ways that Michele has trusted me to do this work, and for how she has taught me to think and write with courage, integrity and deep conviction. After ten years of working with Michele I have a thorough understanding of, and appreciation for, the level of intellectual commitment and emotional labour she has invested in my scholarship and my personal and professional development. Michele has picked me up many times, especially when I did not know if I had what I needed to get to the end. She is a mentor in the truest and fullest sense of the word. To my committee members Anne Rubenstein and Molly Ladd-Taylor, both of whom carefully read through this dissertation, and in doing so pushed me to do the difficult work of thinking through challenging questions and writing with greater precision. I am certain that as a result of their commitment to the intricacies of this work, I have been able to write a dissertation of which I am truly proud. I am also grateful for the members of my examining committee – Daniel McNeil, Andrea A. Davis and Boyd Cothran – who

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"If it's over your life / it's not only a fight /
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It's been a war on the heavily melanated /
For your own security you better be educated."

- Black Thought, "How to Hold a Choppa,"
Streams of Thought Vol. 2 (2018)

- INTRODUCTION -
Cartographies of the Terrordome:
Rap Music as Discursive Pathway to the Politics of America in the Era of Mass Incarceration

"Lies, scandalizin', basing / Traits of hate who's celebrating with Satan? /
I rope-a-dope the evil with righteous / Bobbing and weaving and let the good
get even / […] God bless your soul and keep living / Never allowed, kicking it
loud / Dropping a bomb, brain game, intellectual Vietnam / Move as a team,
never move alone / […] Welcome to the Terrordome."[1]
- Chuck D (of Public Enemy)

As audiences watched the 2018 film *Black Panther* many debated over what the film's creative team appeared to be articulating about the Black experience in America through Rap artefacts. In one particular scene, audiences observed the camera pan through Prince N'Jobu's Oakland apartment as a television in the background broadcasted scenes of Los Angeles on fire.[2] Some members of the audience, including myself and journalist Kyle Eustice of *HipHopDX*, recognized two Rap music visuals adhered to the walls of N'Jobu's apartment.[3] The first, Public Enemy's 1988 album cover for *It Takes A Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back,* was adhered to a false wall where N'Jobu and his associate Zuri hid their weapons.[4] The second poster, promotional material

[1] Chuck D (of Public Enemy), "Welcome to the Terrordome," *Fear of a Black Planet* (Def Jam, April 10, 1990).
[2] In 1992 (the year of the L.A. Riots), Prince N'Jobu (never enslaved) was killed by his brother King T'Chaka. N'Jobu lived in Oakland as part of a Wakandan war-dog mission (war dogs were a group of Wakandan spies scattered across the globe who functioned in a fashion similar to the American Central Intelligence Agency). T'Chaka accused his brother of assisting black-market arms dealer Ulysses Klaue (who later worked with his son Killmonger) with stealing vibranium from Wakanda. N'Jobu's partner Zuri, another undercover Wakandan, confirmed T'Chaka's suspicions. Later in the film, Killmonger (the film's antagonist) returns to Wakanda to avenge his father's death. Once T'Challa learned of his cousin's existence, he asked Zuri to tell him what happened to his uncle. Zuri explained that N'Jobu was troubled by how African American leaders were assassinated, black communities were flooded with drugs and weapons, and Black people were over-policed and incarcerated. He recognized that Black people across the globe were oppressed because they did not have the tools to fight back, while Wakanda did (vibranium). He reasoned that with vibranium, Black people across the globe could develop technologies of war to liberate themselves. For more information on *Black Panther*, see film, *Black Panther*. DVD. Directed by Ryan Coogler. Los Angeles: Marvel Studios, 2018.
[3] Kyle Eustice, "Chuck D On Seeing Public Enemy Posters In 'Black Panther' & His Message to JAY-Z & Diddy," *HipHopDX*, April 7, 2018," https://hiphopdx.com/news/id.46443/title.chuck-d-on-seeing-public-enemy-posters-in-black-panther-his-message-to-jay-z-diddy# (accessed May 12, 2018).
[4] Opposite that wall was another adorned with images of Huey P. Newton (the leader of the Oakland chapter of the Black Panther Party), and the plans N'Jobu and his comrades needed in order to break Killmonger's mother out of prison. Audiences learned that while N'Jobu lived in Oakland, he fell in love with an American woman and they had a child together – Killmonger. While the film did not detail the reasons for Killmonger's mother's imprisonment, Coogler revealed to *The Hollywood Reporter* that Killmonger's mother passed away in prison following N'Jobu and

for the 1990 *Fear of a Black Planet* album, appeared just as audiences learned that T'Chaka was underneath the Black Panther armor.[5]

After reading Eustice's article, I took greater notice of the placement of these Rap texts in N'Jobu's apartment. The first text, artwork for Public Enemy's *It Takes A Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back*, was located directly behind N'Jobu. Eustice reminded readers that the poster was photographed by Glen E. Friedman in 1988 inside the cell of a midtown Manhattan police precinct.[6] This text and its spatial proximity to N'Jobu (a Wakandan living as an undercover African American in Oakland, California) alluded to Black experiences in the era of mass incarceration amid the militarization of California and the War on Drugs.[7] The second text, Public Enemy's promotional poster for the 1990 *Fear of a Black Planet* album, was located directly behind T'Chaka. Eustice explained that the album's original artwork, which was drawn by NASA illustrator B.E Johnson, depicted a "black" planet eclipsing earth. This image captured the central concept of *Fear of a Black Planet* – that is, the knowledge that came into being when the philosophies of Black empowerment eclipsed the structures of global white supremacy. This text and its spatial proximity to T'Chaka alluded to the film's "Black Planet" Wakanda – an all-black

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Zuri's unsuccessful attempt to break her out. For more information on Coogler's interview, see, Ryan Parker, "'Black Panther': Ryan Coogler Reveals What Happened to Killmonger's Mother," *The Hollywood Reporter*, May 4, 2018 https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/black-panther-what-happened-killmongers-mother-1108754 (accessed April 7, 2019).

[5] *Black Panther*. DVD. Directed by Ryan Coogler. Los Angeles: Marvel Studios, 2018.

[6] Eustice, "Chuck D On Seeing Public Enemy Posters In 'Black Panther'."

[7] In this dissertation I will use a capital 'B' to identify Black as a political identity. This identity encompasses many intersections of blackness in America that were either rooted in or routed through and outside of the United States and its histories. The capitalization is also meant to capture how Black identities have worked within, across, outside of and against the American nation state. 'Black' also helps clarify that while some of the historical actors discussed throughout this dissertation have identified as 'African American,' others have not, and their identities and experiences were shaped by, and in some cases eclipsed and simplified by an anti-black impulse and logic. 'Black' is used throughout this dissertation to suggest that anti-blackness has often framed a 'common' black experience in America. In this dissertation I will also use a lowercase 'b' when gesturing to blackness as a descriptor or a state of belonging – as in the case of 'black communities.'

geography and leadership that retained the power to eclipse the rest of the world using their resource of vibranium.[8]

In a later scene as Killmonger visited the ancestral plane, Public Enemy's text granted audiences insight into the terror, trauma and grief he experienced as a Black man in America. Audiences watched as Killmonger walked through what appeared to be his father's old Oakland apartment and studied the wall where the *It Takes A Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back* poster hung during his childhood. He then pulled out a scrapbook from behind that wall where his father once hid his weapons. Inside the pages of this scrapbook were the details of Killmonger's Wakandan ancestry, as well as the coordinates he needed to return to his father's home. Once Killmonger's long-dead father re-appeared during his visit to the ancestral plane, the audience watched as father and son had a painful conversation about Killmonger being fatherless and feeling kinless and lost. When N'Jobu asked his son why he had not shed tears for him, Killmonger stated, "everybody dies, it's just life around here." [9] Adam Serwer of *The Atlantic* argued that Killmonger's life story conveyed what it meant to be an African American consumed with "the psychic and cultural wound caused by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the loss of life, culture, language, and [African] history that could never be restored."[10] Here, the Public Enemy poster reminded audiences that it would 'take a nation of millions' to hold Killmonger back from reclaiming what he had lost.

As black men of the Hip Hop generation enveloped in Rap texts, *Black Panther* screenwriters Ryan Coogler and Joe Robert Cole used narrative film to render an intimate portrait

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[8] Eustice, "Chuck D On Seeing Public Enemy Posters In 'Black Panther'."
[9] *Black Panther*, see film, *Black Panther*. DVD. Directed by Ryan Coogler. Los Angeles: Marvel Studios, 2018.
[10] Adam Serwer, "The Tragedy of Erik Killmonger," *The Atlantic*, February 21, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/02/black-panther-erik-killmonger/553805/ (accessed May 12, 2018).

of black struggle in what scholar Saidiyah Hartman has theorized as the afterlife of American slavery.[11] This portrait was perhaps most evident in one of the final scenes where T'Challa carried Killmonger to a Wakanda plateau to watch the sunset on his father's homeland before succumbing to a stab wound inflicted by his cousin. Despite T'Challa's offer to heal Killmonger's wounds using vibranium, Killmonger rejected his offer and uttered: "bury me in the ocean with my ancestors who jumped from the ships, because they knew death was better than bondage."[12] This scene alluded to a much more deliberatively resistive story of the Middle Passage – one animated by an ancestral history of bondage, dispossession, and the geography of the Atlantic where slave ships functioned as (in)visible containers of cruelty and the ocean served as an unmarked burial ground.[13]

Coogler's *Black Panther,* which was birthed within a cultural milieu that is well-versed with the world of Rap music, raised questions that this dissertation intends to historicize. This dissertation explores questions of race, identity, discourse, knowledge, and power in the dawning of American Rap music by examining interactions among black popular music practitioners, American audiences and the state. This research addresses the following questions: What have been the political uses of Rap music in the era of mass incarceration?[14] How did rappers set out to

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[11] In Hartman's seminal text *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* she theorizes that the "afterlife of slavery" is characterized by the persistent presence of slavery's racialized violence on all sectors and structures of society. As a result of the afterlife of slavery, black communities continue to experience dehumanization and the peril of an anti-black arithmetic and calculus. For more information on Hartman's concept, see, Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

[12] *Black Panther*, see film, *Black Panther*. DVD. Directed by Ryan Coogler. Los Angeles: Marvel Studios, 2018.

[13] Christopher Lebron, "'Black Panther' Is Not the Movie We Deserve," *Boston Review*, February 17, 2018, http://bostonreview.net/race/christopher-lebron-black-panther (accessed July 20, 2019).

[14] According to the Sentencing Project, mass incarceration refers to the rapid rise in America's incarcerated population beginning in the mid-1970s in response to a tide of higher crime in the 1960s, and the passing of state and federal laws that increased the length of prison sentences for a range of criminal activity. This period was proceeded by two decades of crime decline even as the number of incarcerated Americans continued to climb. For more information on the periodization of mass incarceration, see, *The Sentencing Project* http://www.sentencingproject.org/issues/incarceration/ (accessed April 1, 2019).

do this political work? And in what ways was their political work connected to a much larger and longer history of race and power in America? The strategies I use for answering the central questions of this dissertation come from my reading of these thinkers.

This dissertation argues that rappers used Rap music as a battle cry to make claims on power and unmask the modes and mechanisms of American coloniality. In the late twentieth century, Rap music became a politically useful tool that rappers mobilized to narrate the nature of a changing same – the persistence of the afterlives of slavery – to the American public.[15] Unlike earlier forms of black popular music, Rap's claims on power were different in that the genre was a democratizing musical form that provided a wide spectrum of participants with the ability to speak about power, race, class, gender, sexuality and space. This dissertation finds that Rap's political usefulness led gatekeepers inside and outside of the genre to narrate it as terrifying.[16] Some maintained that Rap was terrifying due to the Black experiences rappers chose to recount, while others worried that Rap articulated an alternative set of ethics and moralities that were supposedly unlike those of 'normative' America. This was particularly threatening to those who panicked over the influence that Black artists had over white audiences, especially youth. Others suggested that Rap was terrifying due to its unapologetic exposure of the afterlives of slavery and its articulated frustrations with the failed promises of a post-Civil Rights America. These discourses of terror were hegemonic responses to black cultural observances, inquiries, articulations and critiques. Practitioners and gatekeepers responded to these discourses of terror by

[15] Changing same, a concept that Paul Gilroy following Leroy Jones (Amiri Baraka) has used, questions linear conceptions of history and progress by referring to the thread of continuity as well as the tensions and negotiations between having been, being and becoming. For more information on the changing same, see, David Atkinson, Peter Jackson, David Sibley and Neil Washbourne, eds. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (New York, NY: I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2007), 184.

[16] These gatekeepers included a wide variety of historical actors including politicians, policymakers, lawyers and the courts, police, not-for-profit organizations, corporate executives and employees, academics, activists, religious leaders, journalists and other members of the media, music industry executives, and in some instances, musicians (inside Rap music and beyond).

(re)producing, doubling-down on, problematizing, wrestling with and (re)establishing patterns of knowledge production that reinforced persistent representations of blackness. The section that follows will outline the centrality of orality and discourse production in Rap music to clarify how Rap produced these discourses and differed from the musical forms that proceeded it. I will then discuss the more influential idea of the *duppy state* and coloniality to explain why and how discourses and performances of terror were mobilized in Rap music to generate politics at the level of culture.

Word is Bond: Rap Music, Orality and Discourse Production in Hip Hop Culture

Scholars of Rap music argue that the genre reflected a working class consciousness within late twentieth century urban spaces. Rap music, a form of rhymed storytelling set to music, emerged in the early-to-mid 1970s.[17] Tricia Rose argues that Rap was a late twentieth century African American musical form created within the broader culture of Hip Hop by African American and Afro-Caribbean American authors in the Bronx, New York City.[18] Mark Anthony Neal suggests that this new cultural form was profoundly shaped by the emergence of the post-industrial city and its symptoms – intense poverty, economic collapse, and the erosion of viable public space. By the 1970s, the post-industrial crisis radically shifted black communal sensibilities and rendered highly visible the expressions of a young, urban, racialized working and workless poor demographic.[19] Murray Forman maintains that Hip Hop's evolution corresponds with a process of formal, yet continuous innovation where residual black cultural practices and inheritances (from earlier black

[17] Rap (or emceeing) is one of the four elements of Hip Hop culture. The other elements include deejaying, breaking (or breakdancing) and creating graffiti art/writing. Some practitioners argue that there is a fifth component of Hip Hop culture: knowledge production (or more specifically, knowledge of self).
[18] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 2.
[19] Mark Anthony Neal, "Postindustrial Soul: Black Popular Music at the Crossroads," in *That's The Joint! The Hip Hop Studies Reader*, eds. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 363.

popular culture formats) continued to live amid new forms.[20] Michael Eric Dyson contends that these shifts were emblematic of growing intra-racial class division among African Americans (apparent since the mid-1940s), as well as the social isolation, economic hardship, political demoralization, and cultural exploitation of working and workless poor urban dwellers.[21] Neal argues that due to the pressure of post-industrial changes and intra-class division, Hip Hop culture broadly, and Rap music precisely, should be read as a working-class consciousness within the schema of American class relations. These forms also functioned as a counternarrative to black middle-class mobility in that this constituency was distanced from the daily pressures of black urban working and workless poor realities.[22]

Scholars argue that from Rap's earliest days, rappers prioritized and centered black voices, words, and readings from the margins of urban America. Rappers did so by taking on the role of the urban ethnographer in order to articulate their personal stories and abstract narratives, as well as the pleasures and problems of black urban life more broadly.[23] Robin D.G. Kelley contends that youth created Rap to respond to their exclusion from public space, joblessness, poverty, gang violence, police brutality, the War on Drugs and state-sanctioned oppression. They did so at times in the form of social critique, and in other moments as escapism.[24] Through Rap texts practitioners showcased the elaborate and ever-changing nature of a black urban lexicon; re-contextualized sounds, images, ideas and icons that were meaningful to racialized youth in urban spaces; and made immediate use of the dominant technological, industrial, and ideological institutions of the

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[20] Murray Forman, "Hip Hop Ya Don't Stop: Hip Hop History and Historiography," in *That's The Joint! The Hip Hop Studies Reader*, eds. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9.
[21] Michael Eric Dyson, "The Culture of Hip Hop," in *That's The Joint! The Hip Hop Studies Reader*, eds. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 63.
[22] Neal, "Postindustrial Soul," 363.
[23] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 2.
[24] Robin D.G. Kelley, "Foreword," in *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*, eds. Dipannita Basu and Sidney J. Lemelle (London: Pluto Press, 2006), xii-xiii.

late twentieth century for capital gain.[25] Kelley maintains that these shared desires manifested in a cultural form that transformed the ancestral traditions of oral storytelling and rhyming through technology (mixers, beatboxes, tape machines, and turntables); re-made and re-purposed old black popular music forms (through the art of sampling); created new sounds/soundscapes (as evidenced by the techniques of scratching and sampling); fractured rhythms; and re-imagined the use of voice (by speaking in rhythm and rhyme against instrumentals).[26] Kelley contends that these Rap pioneers did so while living in the shadow of Manhattan where wealth and privilege loomed largely. He suggests that rappers' proximity to Manhattan fueled their desire to transform their creations into skills rewarded by capitalism.[27]

Rap's entrance in the popular music landscape also coincided with a significant democratizing shift and a new set of music-making rules that marked a period of disjuncture, and were at least initially, developed by the working and workless poor. The conventions of Rap music did not require that practitioners enroll in classes to learn how to play instruments or sight-read music charts. Rappers were also not expected to master the vocal techniques necessary to sing solo or in harmony with others (or to sing and possess a vocal range at all). This shift broke down barriers of access and broadened that which was considered melodious. While critics often imagined Rap as discordant, its sonic complexity necessitated that rappers had a keen understanding of soundscapes and musical timing. One of the most central of these new music-making techniques and rules that rappers prioritized was the mastery of the spoken word. Talented rappers were expected to master the techniques commonplace to poetry in order to tell stories; outdo competitors in the area of wordplay and wit; represent themselves as intelligent, unique and

[25] Rose, *Black Noise, 2-3.*
[26] Kelley, "Foreword," xii-xiii.
[27] Kelley, "Foreword," xii-xiii.

original; exhibit an expansive vocabulary; showcase a knowledge of (trans)local, national and diasporic histories; and generate sounds out of items that were not conventionally regarded as instruments.[28] Rap, in many ways, stressed the centrality of oral culture to Africans in the diaspora in that the rapper became the modern griot (a verbal artist and keeper of oral history).[29] In Rap, the griot/storyteller was re-positioned as the leader and as the repository of oral tradition, community history, and knowledge production – making the role yet another legitimate location and means to power/politics.

The prioritization of orality in Rap and the relationship that rappers had to 'the word' was, in part, influenced by the Five Percent Nation. This organization, sometimes referred to as the Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE/NOGE) or the Five Percenters, is a movement that developed in 1964 that teaches that Black people are the original people of the planet Earth, and therefore they are the fathers ("Gods") and mothers ("Earths") of civilization.[30] Their belief system inspired a series of phrases, philosophies and rhetoric available in Rap lyricism. While the Five Percent Nation influenced several rappers, this effect did not always translate into a rapper's commitment to the religious practices of the organization. Instead, many rappers deployed Five Percenter

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[28] For more on rap technique, see, Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois, *The Anthology of Rap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[29] Patricia Tang, "The Rapper as Modern Griot: Reclaiming Ancient Traditions," in *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, ed. Eric Charry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 80-81.

[30] The Five Percent Nation was founded in Harlem in 1964 by Clarence 13X, a student minister who left the Nation of Islam after a schism with the leaders of NOI Temple #7. This group was primarily responsible for circulating, popularizing and reinterpreting NOI teachings among New York City youth. The organization's name came from an NOI lesson with three teaching components. They are: 1) "Eighty-five percent of the earth's people are uncivilized, mentally deaf, dumb and blind slaves who do not know who the Living God is or their origin"; 2) "ten percent of humans are rich slave-makers and bloodsuckers of the poor who use knowledge and power to deceive and exploit and teach that the Living God is a spook who cannot be seen by the physical eye"; and 3) the final "five percent are poor righteous teachers who do not believe in the teachings of the ten percent and possess enough knowledge of self in order to enlighten others on the subjects of Allah, freedom, justice, and equality." For more on the Five Percent Nation and their teachings, see, Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 258-259; Mattias Gardell, *In The Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and The Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 171-173; Yusuf Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths," in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1994), 109-117.

phrases such as "dropping science" or "dropping knowledge" and "dropping jewels" to valorize the practice of sharing knowledge and teaching. Phrases such as "word" and "word is bond" were also borrowed from Five Percenters in order to highlight an affirmation of truth-telling, and an ethic of trustworthiness in word and deed. Felicia M. Miyakawa contends that phrases like "word is bond" referred to the Five Percenter's Lost-Found Lesson Number 1, Question 11: "Have you not learned that your word shall be Bond regardless of whom or what? Yes. My word is Bond and Bond is life, and I will give my life before my word shall fail."[31] Kevin J. Vanhoozer suggests that "word is bond" indicated that language created a bond between the person uttering the word(s) and those listening. The phrase referenced a covenant of discourse among those speaking and interpreting the comments uttered. In this contract, the link between language and the audience was not a permanent metaphysical fixture. Instead, the connection was solidified by the constancy of reliable speech, particularly when the speakers were experiencing a state of permanent flux.[32]

Beginning in the 1970s, young urban African Americans deployed Rap music – and by extension their prioritization of 'the word' – as discourse to observe and comment against the grain on how anti-black spaces, intentions, and practices shaped Black life chances. Rap was first and foremost constituted of words, phrases, ideas, statements and ways of intimately seeing and knowing Black life. As an art form that operated at the level of discourse, Rap produced knowledge using language and statements that were intended to grant insight into urban Black youth experiences. Rap provided practitioners with the possibility to describe, document and even

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[31] Felicia M. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message and Black Muslim Mission* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 41. 46, 49. Miyakawa argues that the Lost-Found Moslem Lessons (from which the "word is bond" lesson comes from) was part of a student's initiation into the Nation of Islam and the Five Percent Nation. For more information on the Lost-Found lessons, see Felicia M. Miyakawa, "'The Duty of the Civilized is to Civilize the Uncivilized:' Tropes of Black Nationalism in the Messages of Five Percent Rappers," in *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations*," eds. Ronald L. Jackson II and Elaine B. Richardson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 184.

[32] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), 434.

critique urban realities; the surveillance, over-policing, and punishment of Black bodies; and the structures and strategies of domination that shaped their quotidian realities. This strategic reading granted rappers the capacity to rupture the status quo and the fixed and seemingly closed and dehumanizing representations and discourses of blackness. Rapper Chuck D argues that this is what made Rap the #revolutionOfTheWord.[33] Rappers used the genre to draw attention to how blackness had been devalued and harmed by an anti-black political arithmetic. Rap lyrics, therefore, became essential counter-mapping tools to disrupt the knowledge of Black life in the United States.

This dissertation examines Rap's relationship to the power/knowledge matrix in narrating American blackness. It is easy to imagine power as direct, absolute, brutally repressive, and one directional (radiating from top to bottom) from a specific source (the sovereign, the state, and the ruling class). These commonplace narrations of power assume that it is a negative force with the sole intention of repressing and controlling populations. However, Stuart Hall points out that power can and should be recognized as a productive network that produces discourse. He maintains that power rarely if ever is monopolized by a single centre. Instead, power permeates all levels of social existence, and circulates to involve everyone — oppressors and oppressed — in its production. In Hall's reading of Foucault, he maintains that the microphysics of this power and regulation are primarily applied to the body that is at the centre of struggles over various formations of power/knowledge. Here, the body is produced within discourse formations and becomes a surface upon which regimes of power/knowledge inscribe meaning and imprint material effects determined by contextual phenomena across time and space.[34]

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[33] Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:24 AM.
https://twitter.com/MrChuckD/status/941569625908826112.
[34] Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader,* eds. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London: Sage Publications, London, 2001), 76-78.

Power in any given society is constituted through knowledge formations across many mediums and the participation of a wide net of social actors. Hall tells us that power is made of knowledge. The regime of truth on any given subject, such as Rap history, is therefore sustained by a discursive formation which becomes 'true' as a result of the material effects of power. Since Rap is both discourse and commentary on discourse, this complicates questions of what is 'real.' In any given society, regimes of truth entail types of discourses that are accepted, function as 'true' and are sanctioned as such by those who are charged with determining what counts as 'true' and 'real.' Once knowledge retains this authority, it is put to work through specific technologies and strategies of application, historical contexts and institutional regimes that can influence how social groups are managed and disciplined. And yet, Hall asks scholars to look beyond the power of the law, the sovereign, and the dominant class to what he calls the 'meticulous rituals' of power. At these levels, power does not merely reflect or reproduce itself. Instead, subjects produce various outputs that complicate the circulation of power. These include products and processes such as storytelling, cultural artefacts, research, private and public conversations and debates, industries, legislation and procedures, and strategies for control and resistance.[35] Hall maintains that in the arena of popular culture, as artists mobilize cultural strategies to shift and transform dispositions of power, they are using claims to knowledge in "wars of position" – a concept borrowed from Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci.[36] Here, Hall maintains that "wars of position" are where the spaces (of incorporation) to be won are few, carefully regulated and only available at a

[35] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 76-77.
[36] Stuart Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture, (reprint)" in *Social Justice* 20:1-2 (Spring-Summer 1993), 107; Daniel Egan, *The Dialectic of Position and Maneuver: Understanding Gramsci's Military Metaphor* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2016), 29-45. For more on the concept of "war of position" and "war of manoeuvre" see, Joseph Buttigieg, *Prison Notebooks: Volumes 1, 2 & 3* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

cost.[37] This is why questions of truth and reality are often so bitterly contested and why Rap's practice of discourse production led to such confusion along the boundary of insider/outsider.

Rap as a practice and reflection of experiential knowledge was constructed and imbued with meaning through discourse. Hall reminds us that discourse produces knowledge; the subjects who speak do not. Discourse produces subjects. Subjects are people who personify the specific elements of knowledge which the discourse produces and defines in its historical context. Subjects are always working within the limits of the discursive formation, the historical moment, and the regime of truth. Subjects are produced within discourse and cannot exist outside of discourse. Instead, the subject must submit to the rules, conventions, and dispositions of the power/knowledge formation.[38] Once the subject identifies with the positions the discourse constructs, they are then subjected to and seated within the discourse and can draw from it the most meaning and sense.[39]

In the era of mass incarceration, discourse and discursive practice vis-à-vis Rap music became a powerful strategy through which Black knowledge of Black life was created, negotiated, reframed and contested (even by Black people). Hall reminds us that discourse entails providing a group of statements intended to represent the state of knowledge about a particular subject at a specific historical moment. In the case of Rap, this meant that discourse often constructed and defined American blackness and the ways it could be meaningfully discussed.[40] Helen McLaren argues that Foucault is concerned with how discourse establishes, prescribes and governs how any

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[37] Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture, (reprint)" 107.
[38] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 79-80.
[39] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 80; Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace argue that Foucault thought of the human subject as an effect of, to some extent, subjection – which allows the subject to "tell the truth about itself." 'Subjection' refers to particular, historically located, disciplinary processes and concepts which enable us to consider ourselves as individual subjects and which constrain us from thinking otherwise. McHoul and Grace argue that the subject is also produced through discourse via the production of a place for the subject (subject-positions). For more information, see, Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject, Volume I* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), ebook.
[40] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 72-3, 76, 78.

given topic becomes 'knowable,' 'sayable,' or 'thinkable.'[41] Nothing has meaning outside of discourse — this is where knowledge, meaning, and meaningful practice are constructed. Within discourse, the topic is produced and the subjects who personify the discourse are constructed as well. In the era of mass incarceration, this was certainly true of Black bodies constructed as urban 'gangster,' 'welfare mother,' and 'rapper.'[42] And if it is true that subjects can say nothing comprehensible outside of discourse, then the limits on Rap's ability to engage politically are profound.

(Un)being Amid the "Duppy State": Foundations, Or, Theorizing Black Geographies and the Black Fantastic

For African Americans, culture has always been a critical battleground where they have negotiated substantial control and accessed and exercised a range of strategies, intentions, and participation that can be understood as politics. For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the term 'culture' to refer to a range of complex relations and material conditions of human life that are transmitted through social learning and reflect real and discursive social histories. 'Culture' can refer to 'material' production – as in the case of physical expressions such as technology, architecture and art – or immaterial elements such as 'symbolic' production and the principles of social and political organization. Historically, the term 'culture' has been used to organize and hierarchically structure social relations, as well as define and designate that which is understood to be sophisticated/ 'cultivated' or crude in the arts, sciences, education, or matters of deportment. In the case of

[41] Helen McLaren, "Using 'Foucault's toolbox': the challenge with feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis," conference paper presented at Foucault: 25 Years On, January 2009, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236030155_Using_%27Foucault%27s_toolbox%27_the_challenge_with_feminist_post-structuralist_discourse_analysis (accessed May 17, 2018).
[42] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 72-3, 76, 78.

material culture, this notion of a hierarchical 'culture' has often been rooted in, and produced through, class-based distinctions and stratified access to cultural capital.[43] Richard Iton argues that since the arrival of Africans in the United States, black popular culture in particular has often been mobilized in broad and less coherent political sentiments to render the invisible visible and the unheard audible. These acts have resulted in utilizing culture as a platform to create discursive disruptions and redefine the parameters of what constitutes 'the political' and the category of 'human.' Iton maintains that an artist's act of producing a verbose and symbolic impact in the public domain should not be overlooked or downplayed as though it were not political. The relationship between black popular culture and black politics must, therefore, be situated within the broader context of political and historical questions and concerns over Black citizenship, and blackness as a location of the ultimate American 'other.'[44] In the case of Rap, artists used culture to imagine alternative ways of knowing Black subjectivities that have long been mapped as unknowable and invisible.

When rappers rendered their black subjectivities visible, they articulated their narratives using what Katherine McKittrick has labelled "Black geographies." McKittrick argues that Black geographies, which are experiential and material realities, offer audiences a series of narrative and material locations that map out, displace, fracture, contest and clarify our understandings of experience, space and place-making. In this process, geography that has been imagined as real and transparent is no longer as obvious and tangible. McKittrick maintains that Black geographies bear witness to "stark absences" – namely, they render visible a set of subjectivities of difference that force us to imagine heterogeneous, alternative, contestational, invisible, unrecognizable and

[43] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary for Culture and Society* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 87-93.
[44] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics & Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9-12, 17-19.

seemingly unknowable geographies. Rap, an instance of Black geographies, renders these absences visible.[45] In Public Enemy's recording "Welcome to the Terrordome," Chuck D alluded to how those in power have nonetheless attempted to silence the Black geographies rappers reveal when he rapped, "snakes blowing up the lines of design / trying to blind the science I'm sending 'em." He reasoned that despite these challenges, the oppressed "cannot run and hide / but it shouldn't be suicide."[46] One of the results of artistic products like "Welcome to the Terrordome" is that they clarify how anti-black racism has structured space, limited Black life chances and constrained the places Black people occupy.[47]

Rap mobilizes Black geographies in order to render visible that to be Black in America and the Black Atlantic has entailed enduring a process of what Christina Sharpe labels "unbeing." Sharpe argues that Blacks in the Atlantic have endured the continued unfolding afterlives of the trans-Atlantic slave trade which dictated that black bodies were chattel and therefore un-being. This phenomenon entails that the black body is emptied of being and self-interpretation and transformed into fungible commodities so that those in power could affix new interpretations and meanings to the black body through discourse. Sharpe maintains that in order for modernity to exist, so too must a discourse that conflated blackness as the ontological negation of being — or put differently, blackness as the abjection from the realm of the human.[48] The outcome of black unbeing is that whiteness circulated in meaning as human, and those read as Black were (and

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[45] McKittrick argues that geography materially structures, marks and spatializes difference to regulate how identities are rationalized, organized, included, excluded, and regulated within borders and regions. Geography then gives materiality to what a subject has lived through and experienced. McKittrick maintains that when human geographies are layered overtop physical geographies, scholars can uncover that which is beneath and beyond the landscape. Katherine McKittrick, "'Their Blood is There, and They Can't Throw it Out': Honouring Black Canadian Geographies," *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7 (2002): 29-31.
[46] Chuck D (of Public Enemy), "Welcome to the Terrordome."
[47] McKittrick, "'Their Blood is There, and They Can't Throw it Out'," 29-31.
[48] Here, Sharpe imagines modernity as the socio-cultural, political, philosophical and technological norms, attitudes and practices that arose in the wake of the Renaissance, Enlightenment and through to the Industrial Revolution that rationalized the West's supposed position of superiority.

continue to be) vulnerable to social and material death.[49] Richard Iton agrees – he reminds us that modernity requires an alterity and it is blackness. Here, Iton contends that modernity is more than merely a flat trope that indicates a benign temporal marker that shifts human history from "darker times" into an era of reason, humanism, and innovation. Instead, within the logic of modernity, African Americans were imagined as problematic others who were reconstituted as the subaltern to Americans read as white.[50]

Beginning with slavery, this process of black unbeing was also framed by a strategic set of racialized power relations that fixed blackness within a totalizing gaze of representations and narratives. bell hooks maintains that this gaze was violent, hostile, aggressive, and ambivalent in its desire. This gaze reproduced apparatuses, strategies, and mechanisms of control that denied African Americans their right to spectatorship and subsequently punished them for looking critically at race and power relations. To look was to understand, to attract, to challenge and to be acknowledged as human.[51] Sharpe argues that much of the ecology of racial experience in America (a climate of anti-blackness that is bounded by and rooted in plantation logics and the brutal architectures of white supremacy) was made invisible. This invisibility hinders the ability of Black and non-Black viewers to see the brutal architectures of power. Sharpe maintains that this inability to see occurs when Black people are unable to recognize the present moment (the afterlives of slavery) as part of the continuation of a historical moment (enslavement).[52] hooks maintains that this violent repression of black spectatorship created an overwhelming longing and at times even a rebellious, courageous and strategic desire to 'look' and "look against the grain." This

[49] Christina Sharpe, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 17-22, 25-28, 32-36, 48, 57-62, 115-119, 131, 141, 154, 178-179.
[50] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 13-15, 27-29.
[51] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 115-116, 124, 126, 130
[52] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 160-162, 170-171, 175, 183.

"oppositional gaze" or what hooks also refers to as b(l)ack looking provided Black people with the potential to document, interrupt and contest the structures of domination that shaped (and continue to shape) their lives.[53]

My dissertation builds on these concepts and contends that in the afterlives of slavery – and Rap figures as one of these locations – African Americans deployed the oppositional gaze to rupture the fixed and seemingly closed and dehumanizing representations and discourses of blackness. hooks argues that when African Americans used culture to look at the afterlives of slavery, they unleashed a repressed gaze. They also entered an imaginative space where they could challenge the racist and phallocentric politics of spectatorship, mediate racial negation, and confront the gaze that had framed, controlled and punished them. According to hooks, black spectators used the oppositional gaze as counter-memory to provide an alternative reading of the nation and the nature of citizenship.[54] That said, hooks' analysis does not entirely clarify the borders around these looking relations – that is, who could meaningfully and 'authentically' speak of what they saw? In the context of Rap music, looking relations were often bordered by notions of authenticity. And while these genre guidelines inhibited some from speaking about the afterlives of slavery in meaningful ways, Rap's looking relations generated a battle cry culture where rappers had the power to engage and contest systems of knowledge that unleashed ideological and material violence on the oppressed.

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[53] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 115-116, 124, 126, 130. As a historian, I have chosen to use bell hooks' concept of b(l)ack looking because this theoretical framework gives me the ability to create a through line across time and space beginning with enslavement and carrying forward to the latter twentieth century. For much of the history of black popular music the act of speaking has often been constrained. hooks' looking relations acknowledges that in the context of enslavement, before Black people could speak, they could look. By following b(l)ack looking across time and space, this dissertation is better able to determine the changes and continuities with regards to the shifting dimensions of the duppy state and the strategies Black musicians have deployed to smuggle moments of dissidence into a prophylactic state since enslavement and its immediate afterlives. While the emerging scholarship on sound studies and listening would be useful, focusing only on sound would make it difficult to track these patterns and developments across the historical record.
[54] hooks, *Black Looks*, 116-117, 130-1.

Rap music was part of a long history of looking relations that allowed African Americans to produce counter-narratives about the United States. Sharpe argues that to be African American has continuously entailed living within the context of quotidian skewed life chances that are so very often framed by poverty, limited access to health and education, incarceration, and immanent and imminent death. These outcomes were rooted in enslavement and continued to reappear and materialize in the afterlives of slavery as black exclusion, harm, unprotection, terror, trauma, and death. African Americans mobilized b(l)ack looking relations to suggest that these outcomes constituted a predictable, constitutive, normative and required quality of American democracy and justice. Sharpe insists that b(l)ack looking ruptures how we imagine the American past and clarifies that American slavery has been mis-imagined and narrated as a completed event. Through these counter-narratives, Black people insist upon the singularity and perpetuation of a totalizing climate of anti-blackness which they argue remains a constant and continuing undercurrent that creates new ecologies of racial experience. Like Iton, Sharpe contends that despite competing discourses that colonial logics were suspended with emancipation, the means and modes of Black subjection (through legal and extralegal strategies) remain both in fact and structure. Legislators transformed slave law into lynch law, the black codes, Jim Crow, and eventually the legal logic of mass incarceration in the latter twentieth century. In the context of Rap, Black artists used b(l)ack looking as a counter-mapping strategy to render the fact and shape of anti-blackness and black unbeing visible.[55]

In order to theorize how African Americans – and rappers most especially – mobilized b(l)ack looking to expose the nature of Black unbeing, this dissertation builds on Richard Iton's theory of the *duppy state*. I have applied Iton's *duppy state* throughout this dissertation as a useful

[55] Sharpe, *In The Wake*, 160-162, 170-171, 175, 183.

conceptual framework to describe the nuances of a potent, persistent, resurgent afterlife of colonialism and slavery which becomes real and visible through a complex set of looking relations produced in Rap texts. The Jamaican concept of the 'duppy' is derived from the Afro-creole belief system that Africans took with them across the Atlantic to places in the Americas. In their new homes, Africans preserved complex ideas about ancestral and spiritual power, the nature of benevolence and malevolence in the material world, and how to deploy worldly energies to manage life's circumstances.[56] Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson argue that believers of duppy did not recognize any real divisions among their spiritual, material, sacred and secular worlds. These beliefs made it possible for Africans to assign spiritual causes to material realities.[57] Moore and Johnson contend that the duppy could be deployed to intervene (whether for good or evil) in order to disturb, work mischief, frighten, annoy or disrupt the daily life of the living. Barnor Hesse suggests that the duppy represented the quotidian possibility of danger and harassment given its capacity to escape from its burial place, remain irrepressible and reappear. Believers held that it was essential to acknowledge the duppy, appease it, guard against its malevolent activities, and encourage the duppy to act well by seeing and speaking with it, leaving food for it, and asking for

[56] The duppy was/is not merely the English ghost. Moore and Johnson argue that the duppy was an apparition whose shadow was left behind on earth while its soul would go to heaven or hell. Duppies did not always take immediately recognizable forms. Instead, they could reappear as ghosts with a rope around their neck, animals (the "rolling calf," the "3-foot horse," cats, dogs, hogs, goats and bulls), and the spirits of dead children. Duppies typically lived at the roots of the cotton trees (which were held in veneration), in bamboos and in caves where they hid during the day before coming out to roam at night. While the duppy is known as such in Jamaica, it has other names across the Black Atlantic. For example, in Guyana they are known as jumbi, in Brazil they are referred to as zumbi, and in Haiti as zambi. For more information on the Jamaican Afro-Creole belief system and duppyism, see Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, "Afro-Creole Belief System I: Obeah, Duppies and Other 'Dark Superstitions'," in *Neither Led Nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865-1920* (Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 36-46.

[57] Hesse, Moore, and Johnson argue that within this cosmological order, believers of duppy held that they inhabited a world where the dead walked among them freely, and they did not leave their loved ones or enemies behind. Duppyism recognized that once a human being died their fate would be decided by the Supreme Being or subordinate deity (they would either go to the spirit world, remain near where their bodies were buried, or haunt the spaces they previously inhabited in a semi-permanent or permanent basis). Barnor Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror: In Search of Black Politics," *Contemporary Political Theory* (2015) 14: 377; Moore and Johnson, "Afro-Creole Belief System I," 14-15, 22, 26, 36-39, 42-46.

its assistance or protection. Moore and Johnson maintain that seeing the duppy was a strength and gift. Those who had this ability were believed to be bearers of agency and capable of providing their communities with immediate solutions to material troubles by manipulating benevolent and malevolent spirits.[58]

Iton argues that the metaphor of the duppy refers to the ghost of the institution of enslavement that cannot be properly buried or disposed of in its aftermath but can be rendered visible by Black artists. As a result, emancipation was haunted by slavery, independence by colonialism, civil rights victories by Jim Crow, and American colourblindness by the era of mass incarceration.[59] Avery Gordon argues that 'haunting' is one of the ways that repressed or unresolved abusive systems of power and social violence become animated and make themselves known – especially when the state denies that system's oppressive nature in everyday practices.[60] hooks contends that spectatorship allows African Americans to look back, interrogate, deconstruct, problematize, and name what they see as a complex and (in)visible coloniality. In the context of Rap, the power to claim and cultivate an awareness of racialized power relations politicizes "looking relations" in that rappers must learn to gaze in strategic ways that facilitate contestation and agency. By actively constructing their subjectivities within practices that resist and challenge the dominant order, rappers are inclined and incentivized to develop alternative texts to read their world.[61] Iton argues that it is precisely in these moments that Black artists explain the persistence

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[58] Moore and Johnson, "Afro-Creole Belief System I," 14-15, 22, 26, 36-39, 42-46.
[59] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics & Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 133-136, 200-201.
[60] Gordon's concept of 'haunting' gestures to a method of knowledge production that explains the costs of modern systems of destructive power. This theory does not insist upon distinctions between the subject and object of knowledge, between 'fact' and 'fiction,' presence and absence, past, present and future, or between what can be known and what remains unknown. For more information on Gordon's concept of 'haunting,' see, Avery G. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), xvi, xvii, xix.
[61] hooks, *Black Looks*, 116, 124, 126-128, 130.

of the *duppy state* and the false happy endings of modernity. Ultimately, b(l)ack looking exposes the intrinsically evil, dead and unkillable nature of coloniality.[62]

Iton's *duppy state* theory clarifies that colonialism haunts the present and was never put to rest despite the power of post-colonial discourse. Alongside the concept of the *duppy state,* Iton describes a prophylactic state that, "inoculates, injects, protects, and secures through the provision of public goods and wards off those elements suspected of spreading various diseases and contagions, in order ideally to produce healthy, self-regulating, and self-fashioning citizens."[63] Iton notes how the prophylactic and *duppy* formations typically occupy and claim the same spatial and temporal borders. He maintains that the desired product of the *duppy state* is "the convenient and necessary other" of the citizen desired by the prophylactic state.[64] *David* Austin contends that Iton's *duppy state* identifies the limits of modernity which he describes as being coeval with coloniality and incompatible with social equality.[65] Iton draws our attention to how the racial/colonial regime has utilized modernity as a project and discourse to subject African Americans to disturbance, disruption and states of fright. Iton suggests that invoking the trope of modernity allows those in power to advance two myths. First, that the United States has moved beyond colonial orders and politics, and second, that these racial regimes have been eclipsed and transcended rather than reupholstered and internalized. These myths conflict with the recurrent gap of African American lived experiences in a post-slavery America where residual and lingering punitive formations of law and order remain. These practices closely resembled the supposedly disestablished and elapsed colonial-racial regimes of American plantation slavery, territorial

[62] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics & Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 133-136, 200-201.
[63] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 133.
[64] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 133-135.
[65] David Austin, "Beyond the Boundaries," *Contemporary Political Theory* (2015) 14: 394-395.

colonization, and violent social and spatial segregation and exclusion. And so, despite master narratives to the contrary, in the post-Civil Rights era and beyond, America's colonial-racial regime continued to terrorize African American communities through social and political forms of institutionalized racial marginalization, trauma, violence, and oppression even as these violations were formally denied.[66]

Throughout this dissertation I use Iton's *duppy state* to suggest that Rap's looking relations emboldened a consciousness to expose how blackness was framed as terrifying while also continually subjected to terror. Christina Sharpe argues that despite discourses of racial progress, the racial calculus that dictated Black unbeing resulted in an ongoing devaluation and destruction of Black bodies. Sharpe names this paradox "the wake," and she uses this term in its many meanings to theorize how the violence that emerges from the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its afterlives has consistently framed the many dimensions of Black unbeing.[67] Sharpe maintains that in the wake, Black people live within continually reinvigorated states of anti-black terror and brutality in the form of containment, regulation, punishment, capture, and imminent and immanent death. This anti-black terror occured even as the violence was simultaneously erased, invalidated and/or denied in public discourse. As African Americans struggled to validate their reading of American anti-black terror, their consciousness emboldened. In the late twentieth century, Rap often captured this emboldened consciousness. Rappers gestured to how blackness was constituted through and by a deep vulnerability to overwhelming force by those who framed blackness as the embodiment and source of terror, and not just merely the object of terror's many enactments. Put differently, from slave law to black codes, to Jim Crow, to mass incarceration, Black people have

[66] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 133, 197, 288; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror," 377–378, 386.
[67] Here, Sharpe is referring to the four definitions of wake: 1) the track left and disturbance caused by the surface of a ship on water (namely the slave ship); 2) the process of keeping watch with the dead and enacting grief and memory; 3) to be in the line of flight and/or sight of a disturbed flow; and 4) to be conscious or aware.

been both the recipients of terror and discursively imagined as terror by the state and the American public; the result was that their blackness and bodies were marked as pathological and weaponized.[68]

Building on the work of Iton, I demonstrate that rappers used culture to clarify how *duppy state* terror and black exclusion from the nation have shaped and emboldened Rap consciousness. In Paul Gilroy's seminal work *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, he argues that African Americans have attempted to transcend the limits and borders of the nation state.[69] Iton maintains that despite these efforts, African Americans have not entirely escaped, resisted or opted out of modernity's existing arrangements and its construction.[70] Instead, within the *duppy state* the excluded are never excluded. Rather, as the state laboured to exclude, stigmatize and subordinate African Americans, it also determined the shape, texture, and existence of boundaries that framed the dominant order and how the marginalized would participate within those limits. Iton argues that within this colonial-racial regime, participation was premised upon civil openness to non-whiteness and opposition to blackness. Within this white-dominated social and political order, black communities have endeavoured to secure equal participation and representation while their concerns are repudiated and their cultures and social practices are pathologized (even as they are co-opted, commercialized and consumed). Within this paradox, black communities encountered asymmetric participation in the nation – that is, political disenfranchisement and opposition to black politics, as well as over-employment in the popular culture arena. Rap music documented the nature of this asymmetrical relationship to the nation by producing critiques of white domination and commodification while also creating cultural products

[68] Sharpe, *In The Wake*, 19, 37-41, 46-47, 81-82.
[69] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York, NY: Verso, 1993), 19.
[70] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 13-15, 27-29.

that fed and benefitted from the consumerist pleasures and comforts of white affectivity and black communal pleasure.[71]

This dissertation explores how American rappers used black popular culture to read the "dominant order" while also participating in and benefitting from the music industry's incentive structure. Iton argues that while African Americans were offered aspects of theoretical and legal integration and racial inclusion in the late twentieth century, they were also held in curtailed and surveilled spaces. The cultural arena was one such space where Black artists simultaneously experienced the benefits of incorporation and the disadvantages of surveillance and censorship as they expressed various levels of distinct and overlapping forms of hope, joy, celebration, demoralization, Afro-pessimism, and postcolonial melancholia. Black artists often articulated these expressions alongside rationalizations that Black creative labour should neither trouble the aesthetic/politics nexus nor express identities that moved outside and beyond nation-state borders. And yet, the history of Rap music in the late twentieth century demonstrated that Black artists did more than accept mainstream norms or profit from mainstream exposure. They also used these spaces of incorporation to exercise their capacity to articulate "performances from the lower registers" which exposed and contested the racial-colonial underpinnings of American democracy.[72]

Rappers brought the *duppy state* and its repressed colonial subscript into unobstructed view by using art as a platform to engage in counter-mapping strategies intended to destabilize the master narratives of modernity and post-coloniality. Iton maintains that this strategy of redress was made possible through the mobilization of the Black Fantastic. Iton argues that the Black Fantastic

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[71] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 4; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror," 378-380
[72] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 3, 13-15, 27-29, 140, 197; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror," 378-379, 385-386.

highlights the uncommon, underdeveloped, evolving and unforeseeable range of possibilities by and through which blackness and modernity were understood and represented across the globe. Through black popular culture forms such as Rap, Black musicians generated Black Fantastic artefacts that articulated notions of being that were within, in conversation with, against and articulated beyond what the trope of modernity categorized as human. These artists mobilized identities long marked as deviant in order to engage with the ongoing question of whether the United States was genuinely post-racial and post-colonial. In doing so, they were granted space to nurture potentially subversive forms of interiority and render public the private geographies of blackness that contested the dominant discourses produced in support of the state. This generative practice brought into the field of play activities and ritual spaces that were often cast beyond or "unrecognizable as politics." In the late twentieth century, rappers often used their medium to challenge how the hegemony foreclosed substantive engagement with the shadow discourses of Afro-modernities which were responsible for slowly pulling away the cornerstones of modernity's racialized edifice. In doing so, rappers produced readings of how the textures of American democracy had contained, managed and restricted Black life chances.[73]

By mobilizing the Black Fantastic, rappers often produced texts and discourses intent on restoring black being. Sharpe argues that Black people have resisted the terror and dehumanization of slavery and its afterlives by mobilizing care practices and an ethics of seeing. Within a dominant ideology that insists on unbeing, rappers, like Black artists before them, manifested Black humanness by creating a body of reporting work positioned against the quotidian catastrophic events produced by the wake. In their work they dared to survive, claim their humanity, imagine and transform spaces for and practices of freedom, and render visible the nature and function of

[73] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 135, 149, 289-290; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror," 380-385.

domination. Like *Black Panther*'s antagonist Killmonger, rappers have often used their medium to recover knowledge. Rap's Black geographies provide a window into an experience shared with those laying at the bottom of the Atlantic. In doing so, rappers connected their lives to the long history of enslavement and its afterlife.[74]

This dissertation demonstrates that Black artists have often used their reporting work to blur the lines between the political and the cultural out of a recognition that these lines are at once false and ephemeral. Iton maintains that 'politics' has often been narrowly understood as formal political decision-making and the individuals who operate within that domain. This limited definition takes as a given that art and politics do not and cannot coexist. However, this logic does not capture how African Americans rarely imagine these domains as being in tension, fundamentally distinct, or at odds in intention and ambition. This is, in part, due to the ways in which African American communities have long been locked out of formal politics and decision-making in direct and indirect ways. Since the late nineteenth century these methods have included literacy tests, vigilante violence and intimidation, poll taxes, gerrymandering, elector fraud and ballot box stuffing, stripping elected officials of their powers, restrictive and arbitrary registration practices, voter ID laws, and felon disenfranchisement laws. Iton points out that when a community is hyperactive and over-invested in the arena of culture, it is usually not a freely chosen strategy. Rather, it is typically the result of and in response to exclusion from formal decision-making processes. And yet, Iton does not mean to suggest that culture is only a political location when people are excluded from formal politics. Instead, culture is in and of itself a valid and stand-alone form of politics where Blacks have often mapped out strategies for their emancipation. They have

[74] Sharpe, *In The Wake*, 46-47, 73, 89, 185-187, 196-197, 207, 212.

done so while also highlighting a deep and precise understanding of how the arenas they do and do not occupy in high numbers shape the textures and function of Black life.[75]

Recognizing the Black Fantastic as a political strategy, this dissertation highlights how rappers survived challenges to their autonomy by deploying culture to expose the nation-state as a racial-colonial regime. Culture has often managed to temporarily (in its specific deployment) and permanently (in its strategy) destabilize, disrupt, expose, critique and corrupt the hidden bodily imperialisms of the colonial. Rappers have often used culture to suggest that America was not an example of progress, cosmopolitanism, humanism and universalism. Rather, this definition of America as modern was a myth. Rappers mobilized the Black Fantastic to suggest that the project of modernity was instead a reupholstered racial-colonial system sustained through dehumanization and non-white exclusion from meaningful political participation. Barnor Hesse suggests that as Black artists produced a critique of the modern state as performance and myth, some became 'duppy conquerors' insofar as they used their medium to deal with, challenge and defeat the great threat of the duppy.[76]

While the Black Fantastic engages the dominant order, it also draws out the main fault line and antagonism within contemporary Black discourse and politics that is also evident in the history of Rap music. Hesse contends that when Black artists mobilize the Black Fantastic, they are able to open up a discursive domain to the oppressed who are now permitted to utter the unspeakable in ways that have never been legitimized.[77] This was partly achieved through a distinction between thick and thin conceptions of Black solidarity (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5). Thin

[75] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 3-9, 13, 17-19.
[76] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 135, 149, 289-290; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror," 380-385. The term 'duppy conqueror' was made popular by Bob Marley's song of the same name which was recorded in 1973 and featured on the album *Burnin*'.
[77] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 135, 149, 289-290; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conquerors," 380-385.

conceptions imagine and represent black communities as closed, coherent and manageable texts. This definition is often predicated on the management, surveillance, and depoliticization of thick solidarities which entails suppressing, containing and silencing Black interiorities that hint towards how post-coloniality might be imagined, mapped and pursued. Thick solidarities aim to disrupt conservative constructions of race, sexuality, gender, class, and nationality. They also grant strategic value to expressions of black solidarity while anticipating the transcendence of race and the structures that support its existence. These thick conceptions provide the source of re-signification necessary to expose and destabilize the practices and function of the *duppy state*.[78] The section that follows uses these ideas about discourse production, Black unbeing and b(l)ack looking within the *duppy state* to understand the political uses of Rap.

Cartographies of the Terrordome: Rap's (Dis)Articulation of the Discourses of Dispossession Amidst the *Duppy State*

As rappers articulated knowledge of the *duppy state*, they also called America's racial-colonial regime to task. That is, Rap texts in the genre's early history became important cartographic tools to pull away the cornerstones of modernity's racialized edifice. Here, I use Menno-Jan Kraak's definition of cartography as a metaphor to refer to how maps help us summarize, clarify, explicate and emphasize aspects of a particular environment.[79] If we imagine Rap texts as maps, then they become a method by which artists tell us stories about the past, assist with the planning and

[78] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 135, 149, 289-290; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror," 380-385.
[79] Kraak argues that maps symbolize and abstract the reality represented. Kraak maintains that in order for the map-maker to engage in the cartographic method, they need to ask themselves, "how do I say what to whom?" In this line of questioning the 'how' references the ways in which details are conveyed to those reading the map – that is, how the symbology and semantics are represented in the data. For the map-maker, the 'whom' is both the map user, as well as the context of the data's use and purpose. For more information, see, Menno-Jan Kraak, "Cartographic Design," *The International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment, and Technology,* edited by Richardson, D. Castree, N., Goodchild, M., Kobayashi, A., Liu, W., and R. Marston. Malden (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016), 466-467.

production of the future, and offer insight into spatial patterns and relations among the mapped phenomena. As a practice that is familiar and central to writing history, cartography also places emphasis on searching for patterns and trends, as well as engaging in and enabling the act of exploration.[80] Throughout this dissertation, Rap lyrics, images, and performances advanced the narrative possibility that America had not moved beyond colonial orders and that these racial regimes were reupholstered and internalized in the form of a ramping up of the carceral state. Rap recordings had the potential to explore, clarify, and expose the discourse of American racial progress as both a falsehood and a performance. These texts often gestured to patterns of residual and lingering punitive formations of American law and order which rappers often argued was evidence that disestablished and elapsed colonial-racial regimes continued. Rappers used these texts to clarify the ways in which they experienced American race relations in the late twentieth century, while also offering insight into how the past persisted and Americans might plan and produce the future.

By the late twentieth century, Rap texts reflected a period of disjuncture as Black artists began mapping out how they might use their genre to produce a state of terror as politics in the form of the "Terrordome" rather than being merely the recipients of terror. Chuck D of the Rap group Public Enemy demonstrated that the "Terrordome" could be useful to rappers to nurture potentially subversive forms of interiority against knowledge of the *duppy state*. Earlier in the introduction, I cited a hashtag that came from a twitter exchange with Chuck D on December 14, 2017. That evening I wrote, "I was just re-reading an old interview you gave for *SPIN*, and I'm curious to know what your personal definition of the word 'terrordome' is?"[81]

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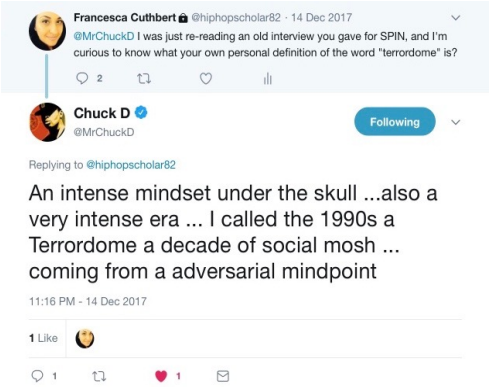
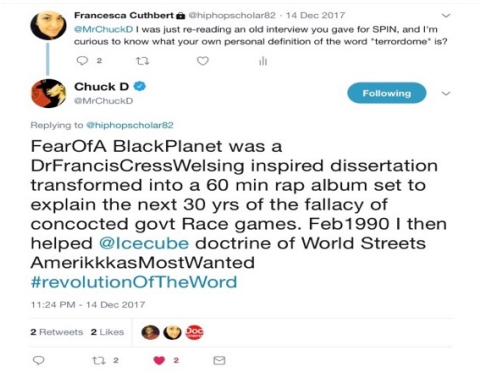
[80] Kraak, "Cartographic Design," 466-467.
[81] Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:16 AM. https://twitter.com/MrChuckD/status/94156764268656230.





Chuck D argued that the "Terrordome" was,

> an intense mindset under the skull…also a very intense era…I called the 1990s a Terrordome[,] a decade of social mosh …coming from an adversarial mindpoint[.] *Fear of a Black Planet* was a Dr. Francis Cress Welsing inspired dissertation transformed into a 60 min[ute] rap album set to explain the next 30 y[ears] of the fallacy of concocted g[overnment] Race games. Feb[bruary] 1990 I then helped Ice Cube doctrine of World Streets *Amerikkas Most Wanted*. #revolutionOfTheWord[82]

In his definition, Chuck D named African American psychotherapist Dr. Francis Cress Welsing as one of the key inspirations for Public Enemy's 1990 album *Fear of a Black Planet* which included the recording "Welcome to the Terrordome." Chuck D's description of the album as a dissertation transformed into a Rap record stressed his self-identification as a scholar and the project as a presentation and analysis of American race relations. Chuck D also referenced his contributions to rapper Ice Cube's [former member of Niggaz Wit Attitudes (N.W.A)] debut solo album *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* (1990). This text similarly drew attention to anti-black and institutional racism, inner city dispossession, drug addiction, poverty, police brutality, and internalized black self-hatred. Chuck D argued that both albums represented a moment where "the

[82] Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:16 AM. https://twitter.com/MrChuckD/status/941567642686562 30; Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:24 AM. https://twitter.com/MrChuckD/status/941569625908826112.

word" had been mobilized to challenge a particular discourse that was unsound and a reflection of misapprehension. Here, Chuck D insisted on the usefulness of black knowledge production. [83]

While some in the 1980s might have drawn a comparison between the "Terrordome" and the 1985 post-apocalyptic film *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, African American writer Christopher C. Thompson notes that the lives of Black people in the United States do bear a considerable resemblance to this dystopic narrative film. In *Beyond Thunderdome*, Max Rockatansky lived in a dystopian world where conflicts were resolved in a duel to the death in a dome-shaped gladiatorial arena called Thunderdome. During the gruesome battles, expectant onlookers climbed the outside of the dome's metal cage to cheer for their favorite fighter from a position of safety and security.[84] Thompson stated that, "for most African Americans, life in America is a type of Thunderdome; or better yet, Terrordome. It's a place that is characterized by a continuous cycle of terror, trauma, grief and upheaval."[85] In his comparison of the Thunderdome and the Terrordome Thompson recalled,

> Recently I've had more than one person ask me 'Why can't black people just get over it?' To that question my immediate response is, get over what? I assume they mean slavery, but I pause and think and then realize that they don't live inside the Terrordome. They can't possibly understand what it's like to live in [the] midst of incessant trauma. They don't understand the constant cycle of terror that black folks have endured ever since those ships docked on the shores of west Africa. The cycle has persisted since the early 1600s (even before then) and there has not been one single solitary stretch of respite for black folks since.[86]

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[83] Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:16 AM; Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:24 AM.
[84] Christopher C. Thompson, "Life in the Terrordome," *Adventist Today*, October 26, 2017, https://atoday.org/life-in-the-terrordome/ (accessed June 9, 2019).
[85] Thompson, "Life in the Terrordome," (accessed June 9, 2019).
[86] Thompson, "Life in the Terrordome," (accessed June 9, 2019).

Here, as Thompson compared two texts and discourse, he also drew to the fore a distinction between the Thunderdome – a fictional narrative – and the Terrordome – a real and embodied Black knowledge of America.[87]

For American rappers, the 'Terrordome' captured a heightened state of Black terror as well as the terrified consciousness of white Americans which was rooted in the transformations brought about by enslavement and post-colonial realities. Kenneth Ramchand argues that decolonization entailed "heightened states of consciousness" for both the colonized and the colonizer.[88] In his seminal theory on "terrified consciousness," Ramchand reminds us of Frantz Fanon's description of decolonization and the relative states of consciousness the process produced:

> [D]ecolonization is always a violent phenomenon. […] Its unusual importance is that it constitutes, from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized. To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded. The need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the lives of the men and women who are colonized. *But the possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of a terrifying future in the consciousness of another 'species' of men and women: the colonizers.*[89]

Ramchand labels the colonizer's state of consciousness in the afterlives of slavery a "terrified consciousness."[90] He suggests that in a seemingly changed land following the fall of the planter class and the emancipation of the enslaved, white people witnessed the changing attitudes towards Black bondage and reacted with shock and disorientation. In part, whites in power were readjusting

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[87] Ten years after the release of *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, rappers Tupac Shakur and Dr. Dre released a music video for their party-anthem "California Love" which was inspired by the film. In the video, the Thunderdome was spatially situated in Oakland, California which the rappers labelled the 'Wild, Wild West.' The rappers performed inside the dome on a raised platform with dancing audience members encircling them on both the inside and outside of the dome. In the opening phrases of Tupac's verse, he mentioned that while they were currently partying in the desert, he was only recently released on bail from jail.
[88] Kenneth Ramchand, "Terrified Consciousness," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 4:1 (1969): 9.
[89] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1963), 35-36; Ramchand, "Terrified Consciousness," 9.
[90] Ramchand, "Terrified Consciousness," 9.

to a world that had been transformed by the promise of Black freedom and the awareness among Black people of their own power.[91] This consciousness produced various levels of insecurity, paranoia, terror, and fright. In this seemingly new world, white people in power witnessed a formerly colonized people with the potential and power to express their demands, provide counter-readings of the status quo, and in doing so, shift the social structure that had been constituted under enslavement.

In the "Terrordome" rappers used Rap music as a battle cry to weaponize their reading of America as a "changing same" and terrify those in power. In the "Terrordome," rappers made a claim on power by taking up persistent readings of the black body as weaponized and inverting the meanings and purposes of these narratives in their lyrics and performances. The "Terrordome" offered rappers the narrative possibility to embody terror and disrupt the status quo. In their performances, rappers welcomed those interested in maintaining the status quo to a "Terrordome" characterized by a material and psychological terror familiar to African Americans since enslavement. Rappers granted those unfamiliar with this location access by producing and disseminating lyrics and performances that described this psychic, social, political, economic and cultural violence. These rappers used the "Terrordome" to clarify that this lived sense of terror was the result of white supremacy and an ongoing desire and paranoia among those in power to reproduce that violence in the afterlives of slavery.

Those in power imagined Rap's "Terrordome" as threatening for a variety of reasons. First, the "Terrordome" articulated an alternative set of ethics and moralities that were framed as contrarian to those of 'normative' America. In some instances, particularly among some white fans and those of the elite classes, the marketplace allure of Rap music did not undermine existing

[91] Ramchand, "Terrified Consciousness," 9.

racism. For some of these observers, Rap was framed as a confirmation – and justification – of the stereotypes that already circulated in a (white) public forum about blackness. Second, the "Terrordome" rendered visible a set of black experiences that undermined the late twentieth century narrative of colourblindness and racial progress in America. Third, the "Terrordome" clarified that the era of mass incarceration *was* reupholstered coloniality and the terror Black people experienced was not manufactured. African Americans continued to be terrified by the ongoing threat posed by the unkillable *duppy state*. Fourth, in the "Terrordome," rappers were unafraid despite ongoing attempts by those in power to silence, contain, corral and dehumanize them. They used this practice to exercise an unwillingness to remain silent about the varied levels of violence that characterized Black lives in America. And finally, in the "Terrordome" Rap gave a wide spectrum of Americans – especially those who lacked power – the ability to sharpen their looking relations and express their anger. Inside the "Terrordome," the mechanisms and modes of power became clearer. So too did the potential for black-white allyship and the possibility that those in the position of the powerless could destabilize the status quo. In the "Terrordome" the categories of *terrorized* and *terrified* were discursive, unstable and unruly.

In Chuck D's definition of the "Terrordome" he clarified that rappers terrified those in power by using their knowledge of coloniality that they housed in their brains. Through the use of double entendre, Chuck D gestured to a commonplace understanding among Rap insiders of "dome" as the human brain.[92] To Rap from "off the dome" refers to the genre practice of improvisational freestyle wherein a practitioner produces lyrics that are typically neither written nor memorized, and are often responsive to the rapper's immediate context.[93] If we imagine a

[92] Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:16 AM.
[93] To freestyle is a mark of craftsmanship, wit, and intellectualism, as well as sharp responsiveness. Perhaps, most importantly, the technique recalls an artistic practice that is rooted in and routed through the black musical tradition (as is evidenced by other genres such as Blues, Soul, Funk and most especially Jazz).

rapper's brain as a map, then the brain is a place that houses, constructs and recalls knowledge that can then be articulated and disseminated through Rap texts. Chuck D argued that his Rap lyricism reflected a frame of reference that was both intense and adversarial. His classification of 'terror' recalled what Sharpe labels weaponized blackness in that the terror housed within the landscape of his brain was both frightening and responsible for conflict, opposition, annoyance and perhaps even hostility. In the lyrics of "Welcome to the Terrordome," Chuck D stated "when I get mad / I put it down on a pad / give ya something that ya never had / […] dropping a bomb / brain game / intellectual Vietnam."[94] Here, Chuck D compared the weight and power of his experience transformed into thought and rhyme to the technologies of war. Here, the kind of pain his victims could expect would be the weaponized mind.

Like Chuck D's frontman performances, Rap became politically useful when rappers embodied the discourse of Black masculinity as terrifying to address the violence of the Terrordome. This is perhaps most evident in "Welcome to the Terrordome" when Chuck D borrowed boxing terminology to declare his intent to confront evil forces: "I rope-a-dope the evil with righteous / bobbing and weaving and let the good get even."[95] Chuck D claimed that if those in power wanted a taste of his, "cold delivering pain," they should, "c'mon down / […] welcome to the Terrordome."[96] Here, the rapper posed as terrifying rather than merely as the terrorized. This definition gestures towards what Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Bilson call the 'cool pose' (or the "badman" trope common to blaxploitation films and black folk culture as in the case of Stagolee or bluesmen like Robert Johnson). This gender performance, a ritualized masculinity used largely by Black men, was a critical psychological defense available since enslavement that epitomized

[94] Chuck D (of Public Enemy), "Welcome to the Terrordome."
[95] Chuck D (of Public Enemy), "Welcome to the Terrordome."
[96] Chuck D (of Public Enemy), "Welcome to the Terrordome."

strength, control, pride and aggression. While this expression could generate balance, stability and confidence, it could also wreak destruction in the lives of young Black men in terms of engaging in harmful behaviours and inducing fearful (white) responses.[97] Here, Chuck D appeared to be proudly taking on the 'cool pose' in order to produce breathing space for rappers who were eager to take their power back.

Chuck D also described the "Terrordome" as a spatial and temporal period within the broader historical era of mass incarceration. In his second description of the "Terrordome," Chuck D described the 1990s as a "very intense era" – or otherwise put, a "decade of social mosh."[98] His use of the phrase "social mosh" conjured up images of movement at music concerts that were violent (the act of jumping and colliding with other dancers who are nearby), responsive, and deliberate in intention. In the recording "Welcome to the Terrordome," Chuck D used a series of examples to describe an America that was framed by black death (the murder of Yusef Hawkins), an inequitable and corrupt criminal justice system (the Central Park Five Jogger case), the surveillance and punishment of black bodies (the 1989 Virginia Beach Riots), and racial and ethnic antagonism (artist Professor Griff's anti-Semitic statements in a *Washington Times* interview).[99]

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[97] Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Bilson, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), xi-xii, 2-3, 7-8. For additional information on the 'badman' trope, see, William L. Van Deburg, *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[98] Chuck D. Twitter Post. December 15, 2017, 11:16 AM.

[99] Yusef Hawkins, a 16-year old African American from Bensonhurst (a predominantly Italian-American working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York) was shot to death on August 23, 1989. A crowd of 10 white youth (many of whom were Italian American) – at least seven of whom were wielding baseball bats, while one was armed with a handgun – attacked Hawkins and three friends. The white attackers had been lying in wait for the young boy they believed had dated a neighborhood girl. During the 1980s, Hawkins' death was the third killing of a young black man by white mobs in New York City. Four months earlier on April 19, 1989, Trisha Meili, a white female jogger, was assaulted, raped and found unconscious (and in a coma for 12 days following the incident) in Central Park (New York City). Five juvenile males (labeled then as the 'Central Park Five') — four African American and one Latino American—were apprehended and tried for assault, robbery, riot, rape, sexual abuse, and attempted murder based on confessions that they said were coerced and false. The young men were convicted a year later and sentenced to a range of 5 -15 years. In 2002, Matias Reyes (a convicted murderer and serial rapist) confessed to raping the jogger (DNA evidence confirmed his guilt). The crime resulted in the incorrect use of the term "wilding" as the unprovoked gang assault on a stranger – a term that is referenced in "Welcome to the Terrordome." In 2019, following the release of film director Ava Duvernay's narrative re-telling of the Central Park Five story in *When*

Inside of the "Terrordome," African Americans were living within a broader social and cultural context of violence that generated multiple levels of terror.

The political power of Rap came from rappers mobilizing the "Terrordome" as discursive formation to explore the nature and texture of what I have labelled the "discourses of dispossession." This category of the 'dispossessed' was constructed by those with and without power. While the definition of 'dispossessed' varied according to one's relative closeness to the source of power, their proximity did not guarantee a desire to oppress. Rather, the "discourses of dispossession" represented sites where the oppressed met their oppressors (however constituted) in order to wrestle over the meaning of blackness in America. In some cases, this regime of truth circulated the falsehood that Black bodies were not human bodies, and were therefore deserving of management, regulation, discipline and punishment. This discourse materialized in mass incarceration, economic deprivation, housing segregation and gentrification, police brutality and white vigilante violence. In other moments, this discursive encounter resulted in efforts to respond to Black unbeing and imagine Black humanness and futurities. This is how people without power resisted the very techniques and formations of oppression. In either case, these discourses were rarely if ever simplistic. Instead, they were always intersectional, nuanced, complex, multi-directional and multiple. Just as these discourses were dissimilar, so too were their authors in that they were positioned within hierarchies of power in disparate and uneven ways. More often than

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They See Us, the five men are now referred to as the Exonerated Five. Finally, Public Enemy also reference the 1989 Virginia Beach Riots along the Virginia Beach, VA oceanfront. The incidents of September 3rd 1989 were the result of a clash between police and thousands of black college students celebrating the annual Greekfest in Virginia Beach. According to several accounts, police began enforcing curfews and arresting attendees for petty offenses such as jaywalking and playing loud music, while other students were required to show their hotel keys everywhere they went, and many were not allowed to enter stores. Attendees interpreted these tactics as racist and took to the streets in anger. Public Enemy's popular anthem "Fight the Power" was said to be the soundtrack that riled up the masses. In the confrontation, over 100 storefronts were damaged, and a reported 650 people were arrested over two days. For more information on the Central Park Five and the Virginia Beach riots, see, Natalie Byfield, *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), and Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996).

not, as rappers mobilized these "discourses of dispossession," they rendered visible black interiorities and remixed previously held notions of blackness as terrifying to encounter and fight down the *duppy state*. These discourse engagements were also for varied audiences. In some instances, rappers deliberately spoke to and with Rap insider circles. In other cases, rappers cast wider nets to include those outside of Hip Hop culture with the unintentional and intentional capacity to inform and terrify.

The discursive potential of Rap's "Terrordome" included the capacity and possibility to unmask the state and other holders of power, as well as challenge and possibly even reconfigure knowledge systems designed to maintain the status quo. If Rap as discourse was an attempt to engage in ways of seeing, knowing and understanding blackness and power, this work acknowledges how some anti-Rap critiques could have been part of a much lengthier and historically rooted attack on blackness and Black attempts at humanness.[100] That is because definitions of blackness have long been at the center of many public debates over race and power in America. And so, as rappers reviewed Black unbeing, they also bore witness to the ways in which whiteness continued to circulate as human and therefore at the center of circuits of power. In order to generate these observations, rappers mobilized Rap in liberatory, invitational, exploratory, threatening, and even terrifying ways. In some cases, Rap re-framed knowledge systems and even assisted in reconfiguring the outcomes of state-level practices that shaped black life chances. In other cases, particularly those where rappers were unsure of Rap's power, they curiously and cautiously engaged with the art form. In other cases, Rap was a discourse of threat that invited fear, scrutiny, repression, and censorship from those who were anxious about the

[100] Sharpe, *In The Wake*," 160-162, 170-171, 175, 183.

genre's capacity to destabilize power. This impulse to control the artform came from white as well as Black people who shared a desire to maintain the status quo.

The political usages of Rap and its ability to confront its weaponized blackness in a (white) public forum were complicated by thick and thin conceptions of black solidarity.[101] Like any process, black popular culture as a site of exchange is fraught. While black communities could produce contestational readings, there were differently constituted moments in Rap's early history that resulted in attempts to shut down Black voices even as they articulated alternative philosophies and practices. These solidarities often dictated decisions over who could engage in efforts to silence their peers and who among them had the privilege to speak. As such, this dissertation demonstrates that throughout the early history of Rap music there were a number of historical actors who debated over which voices and whose perspectives would frame narratives of blackness and the needs of Black people in America. This project clarifies that it was possible for Black subjects to be a part of authoritative efforts to shut down segments of Rap's b(l)ack looking. This argument was made clearly in "Welcome to the Terrordome" where Chuck D clarified that making bonds on the grounds of race did not always guarantee genuine alliance. He rapped, "every brother ain't a brother / cause of colour / Just as well could be undercover. / […] every brother ain't a brother cause a Black hand / squeeze on Malcolm X the man / the shooting of Huey Newton / from a hand of a Nig who pulled the trig."[102]

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[101] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 135, 149, 289-290; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror," 380-385.
[102] In this reference, Chuck D provided 'evidence' that blackness does not guarantee genuine allyship by referencing the murder of black leader Malcolm X and the attempt on Black Panther Huey P. Newton's life – both of which, some suspect were at the hands of African Americans. Chuck D (of Public Enemy), "Welcome to the Terrordome."

Rap Texts, Source Materials and Dissertation Organization

This dissertation is laid out chronologically and analyzes four subsets of primary sources produced between 1979 and 1995 in an attempt to expand the uses and definition of the archive. The project begins in 1979 – long recognized as the year that Rap music first mainstreamed and became visible beyond its initial local audience – and it ends in 1995 with an analysis of Rap music's impact at the level of the state and in relation to public dialogues and displays in the nation's capital. This dissertation uses scale – both in terms of chronology and spatiality – to track Rap music's evolution from a local and regional phenomenon to national visibility, while also generating a through line from enslavement and the afterlives of slavery to the development of the genre in the late twentieth century. The first set of primary sources used in this dissertation to analyze Rap music focuses on the music and its creators. This set of sources includes recordings and their transcribed lyrics from solo, group and soundtrack albums. These materials were compiled in a database that includes the recordings of 77 Black musicians across 203 albums. The details of this database are discussed more fully in a note on sources following this dissertation's conclusion. I also used other materials that related to the recordings such as live performance footage, music videos, films, album sleeves, covers and liner notes. The second set of sources includes published materials about the performers such as artist biographies and autobiographies, newspaper and magazine clippings, written and recorded artist interviews, *Billboard* Magazine chart listings, concert reviews, event flyers and promotional materials, protest footage, radio and television broadcasts, press releases, photos and packets, public relations communications, fan memorabilia, and personal letters of correspondence. The third set of sources includes materials produced during events that commented on Rap such as documents from Congressional subcommittee hearings, transcripts and video footage of the proceedings, transcripts of district court cases, rulings from those cases, and

documents highlighting decisions by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) when lobbying for legislation on music censorship, advisory labeling, copyright, and sampling. The fourth set included personal correspondence and published and unpublished ephemera. These include six subject-guided open-ended oral interviews that were approved by York University's ethics board.[103] By reading these varied sources through an interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical lens, this dissertation endeavours to expand what and how historians have come to know African American history.

Chapter One explores the history of African American music beginning in the seventeenth century through to the late 1970s. The intention here is to outline the three major strands of African American music-making (sacred, secular and secular instrumental), as well as their trajectories across time and space. This chapter traces the evolution of African American music in four distinct historical periods (enslavement, reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, and the era of mass incarceration) in an attempt to capture what lyrical utterances, sounds, performances, and music-making practices emerged within and across different periods of American anti-blackness. This chapter captures how b(l)ack looking opened up space for the marginalized to engage with various discourses and render knowable complex black interiorities. Rap was and is an African American art form. But it was not exclusively African American in its genesis. Like Jazz, Rap is a Black Atlantic music-making practice; its creators are rooted in and have been routed through the Caribbean, Latin America and the UK. This is due in part to the trans-local biographies of its creators, the proliferation of technology and media in an age of visual surplus, and the foundational sonic and vocal genre practices that were generated within and outside of America's borders.

[103] These interviews were conducted with five musicians and one film director, each of whom provided written approval before the interview. The interviews ranged from a half hour to two-and-a half hours. All of the interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and stored in a locked facility for the length of the study.

Chapter Two analyzes the effects of the post-industrial crisis and the "remasculinization of America" in the 1970s and 1980s on Rap music and the genres that developed alongside it: Disco and R&B. This chapter contextualizes Rap, Disco and R&B within a historical moment where some music industry and media insiders were attempting to include Black artists in the mainstream, while others contested this process. Chapter Two pays special attention to the anxieties over gender that developed in this period, and to the various patterns of appreciation, appropriation, co-optation, and pacification that materialized as a result of these apprehensions. Chapter Two finds that audiences for Disco and R&B variously despised and delighted in their apparent hyper-femininity. This chapter compares these genres of music to the narratives of hyper-masculinity provided by musicians, audiences and critics of Rap. Examining these gendered discourses, Chapter Two argues that the privileging of racialized, class-based, gendered and sexually-specific scripts profoundly shaped Rap's artistic codes and performances, the nature of its public reception, and the efforts of the music industry to limit Rap to a discourse of masculinity.

Chapter Three considers how Rap's mainstream presence deepened, and as it did, so too did elite concerns over its usefulness. Across the 1980s, some elites intended to utilize the more palatable components of Rap music to serve commercial and government purposes. Advertisers imagined Rap as a useful communication tool. They hoped to dialogue with American youth, (particularly racialized constituencies) and influence their choices. State actors and those working within arms of the state hoped to inform and regulate the choices of young people and the activities they participated in. And yet, when rappers used Rap's 'Terrordome' on their own terms to discuss systemic issues, abuses of (white) power and an ethics of care for their black communities, their efforts were read as disruptive and terror-inducing. This chapter argues that as Rap gained greater mainstream visibility, and the association between urban space and its inhabitants as 'criminal'

intensified, the public discourse over the genre's usefulness began to shift. What was once a genre that elites imagined as useful was quickly framed as disconcerting and at worst terrifying. As rappers struggled to maintain a positive public reputation, their working (and often extractive) partnerships with these elites began to deteriorate in noted, subtle and dramatic ways.

Chapter Four is set in the 1990s when anxieties over art, obscenity, censorship, race, and power overwhelmed public discourse. This chapter analyzes three Rap case studies: the highly politicized 2 Live Crew, 'Cop Killer' and Sister Souljah controversies. These case studies explore discursive appeals to and contestations over freedom of speech in a racial context. Rappers were increasingly using their medium to document the ways in which their bodies were constituted through and by a deep vulnerability to state-level terror. They also commented on how blackness was pathologized and weaponized in public discourse as the source, carrier and ground zero of terror. These cases demonstrated what was gained and lost when rappers and their audiences made demands to speak politically. These three case studies highlight elites' attempts to stifle Black artists' political conversations. It also demonstrates rappers' role in reframing narratives of American freedom and democracy as societal performances. Specifically, these conversations emphasized rappers' refusals of narratives of colourblind American freedom and democracy.

Finally, Chapter Five analyzes two widely publicized mid-1990s political debates over Rap discourses and Black solidarity politics. This chapter examines the Congressional Hearings on Gangsta Rap in 1994 and the Million Man March in 1995. In these debates, Rap figured as an important lens through which critics and supporters of Rap discussed, considered and perhaps even attempted to reconcile the conflicts and concerns of 'the black community' in (white) public spaces. In these conversations about the work and role of rappers, Rap music became a screen on which African Americans negotiated how they wanted to be narrated to the American public.

African Americans also discussed to what degree they were willing to negotiate the borders around what constituted 'appropriate' blackness in the American mainstream. These discourses of respectability mimicked the *duppy state* in that they continued to grant power to the colonial gaze. This chapter argues that these debates were just as much about the nature of African American interiorities, as they were about who should speak on behalf of African American interests. As African American critics and supporters of Rap engaged in these political debates they drew attention to the continually changing, 'unruly' and always-unpredictable nature of African American identity politics and communal belonging within a broader national discourse where blackness was designated as unbeing.

And yet, by focusing on Rap music as a site of invention, commodification, and management, I am aware that this study could perpetuate the dominant narrative that Black musicians continued to be at the mercy of institutions and persons of influence and power. This dissertation attempts to nuance the dominant narrative in several ways. First, by outlining Rap's history, evolution and its contributions to American popular culture, I demonstrate how complicated the relationship was between Black artists as independent cultural producers, Black and non-Black communities, consumers/fans, the culture industry, the state and its various apparatuses. Second, although this dissertation focuses substantially on Black masculinities, it averts the risk of subsuming the presence of Black female rappers beneath the very gendered logic that defined this genre by acknowledging how Black women fought to negotiate and navigate space in what were often tightly bound performative geographies. The intention here is to promote a greater understanding of the difficulties that these gendered terrains presented to men and women as artists, business people, and members of a historically disempowered community endeavoring to use culture as a political platform. Furthermore, by reflecting on how race, class, gender,

sexuality, generation, and space interacted with the power/knowledge matrix in the era of mass incarceration, this dissertation clarifies further that power is negotiated, relational, multi-directional, and never uniformly or entirely in the hands of one interest group over the other.

Finally, this dissertation is not only the documentation of post-Civil Rights era phenomena, but a narrative that connects the black interiorities of the enslaved, formerly enslaved, and the inheritors of enslavement's terror to an ongoing and not yet fulfilled project of black being. This dissertation attempts to push to the foreground the questions and concerns of urban black youth in the late twentieth century that extended beyond transparent space and time through to the underpinnings of colonial practices and trappings. Building on McKittrick's seminal work, I hope to demonstrate that rappers and Rap texts were not consumed with the question of where blackness is from. This is because blackness is not anchored to a "from." McKittrick contends that blackness is an invention of racial/colonial practices that are rooted in biocentric codes, naturalized by racial hierarchy and extended through a refusal of black humanity. This is what McKittrick labels "the nowhere of black life."[104] This analytic has pressed McKittrick to ask: "If there is no from, where are we? What do we do with the profoundly disturbing impossibility of black geographies that unfold into prisons, […], and swaths of premature death?"[105] McKittrick suggests that the answer might be found in culture. And if McKittrick is right, then it stands to reason that Rap music served as a vital vessel through which African Americans dealt with her harrowing question.[106] And so by connecting this late twentieth century story to a much older narrative about a total system intended to enslave, contain and dehumanize, this dissertation reminds readers of the political

[104] McKittrick, "Their Blood Is There, and They Can't Throw It Out," 29-31; McKittrick, "Commentary: Worn Out," 97-99.
[105] McKittrick, "Their Blood Is There, and They Can't Throw It Out," 29-31; McKittrick, "Commentary: Worn Out," 97-99.
[106] McKittrick, "Their Blood Is There, and They Can't Throw It Out," 29-31; Katherine McKittrick, "Commentary: Worn Out," 98.

power of black invention amid violent opposition, coercive domination, unyielding trauma, and persistent terror. This impulse, which is often expressed and regenerated on and through geographies on the edge(s), is where pronouncements of black humanity and persistence have long had their worth and continue to survive. What follows in Chapter One is the story of how African Americans have continually used music as politics throughout American history to create possibility, push back against their oppressors and transform their worlds. These impulses are central to understanding the political uses of Rap music in the late twentieth century and the desire among rappers to imagine a better world for racialized people.

- CHAPTER ONE -
"Endangered Species (Tales From the Darkside)": The History of Song in Black America, and Black America in Song

"Peace?/ Don't make me laugh! / [...] I'm a nigga, gotta live by the trigga / How the fuck do you figure / That I can say "Peace" and the gunshots won't cease? /Every cop killer goes ignored / They just send another nigga to the morgue / A point scored, they could give a fuck about us / They rather catch us with guns and white powder / If I was old, they'd probably be a friend of me / Since I'm young, they consider me the enemy / They kill ten of me to get the job correct / To serve, protect, and break a nigga's neck"[1]
– Ice Cube

For African Americans, culture has always been a critical battleground where they have exercised a range of strategies, intentions, and participation that can be understood as politics. Waldo E. Martin Jr. contends that across American history, Black culture has functioned as an essential battleground for African Americans in their quest for freedom because they have had far more control over their culture than most aspects of their world.[2] Richard Iton argues that since the arrival of Africans in America, artists have mobilized black popular culture in broad political sentiments to render the invisible visible and the inaudible audible. African Americans have utilized culture as a platform to create discursive disruptions that redefine the parameters of what constitutes the political and the human. Iton maintains that African Americans' use of culture to produce a diffuse and symbolic impact in the public domain should not be overlooked or downplayed as a political act. Within the context of enslavement and the afterlives of slavery, African American artists have used black popular culture as Black politics. They have done so to raise questions and address concerns over Black citizenship within a broader socio-political context where blackness is affixed with the status of American other.[3] Iton suggests that throughout the

[1] Ice Cube, "Endangered Species (Tales From the Darkside)," *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*, Priority Records, 1990.
[2] Waldo Martin Jr., *No Coward Soldiers: Black Cultural Politics and Postwar America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 3.
[3] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics & Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9-12, 17-19.

majority of American history, African Americans have been constituted as "the excluded," and yet they have never been excluded. Instead, their ongoing marginalization since the seventeenth century has long governed the shape, quality, and boundaries of the dominant order.[4] In response, Black artists have utilized culture to render visible their interiorities which have long been mapped as unknowable and invisible by those in power.[5]

Since the seventeenth century, black popular music in the United States has often served as a site of strategic contestation where practitioners outlined and mapped the African American experience as a site of difference. Stuart Hall argues that the 'popular' in popular culture refers to the everyday and local narrative practices that de-center and displace old hierarchies, open up new spaces of contestation, and affect a momentous shift in cultural relations.[6] That said, the 'popular' is not static. Rather, what is "highbrow," "middlebrow" and "lowbrow" or "popular" are ordered differently from one historical moment to another.[7] Unlike other forms of culture, popular culture is rooted in the expressive experiences of the communities from which it draws its strength. The signifier "black" in black popular music refers to the Black communities from which a set of unique and historically defined traditions and aesthetics came, struggles and experiences survived and persisted, and counter-narratives took shape. Scholars of black popular music have demonstrated that these alternative repertoires are diverse, negotiated, and may not always be neatly aligned or reducible. Hall argues that these aesthetics include a distinct style of expressivity, direct mastery

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[4] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 3.
[5] For more on black geographies see, Katherine McKittrick, "'Their Blood is There, and They Can't Throw it Out': Honouring Black Canadian Geographies," *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7 (2002): 29-31.
[6] Stuart Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture," in *Black Popular Culture*, ed. Gina Dent (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992), 21-22, 26-31; Stuart Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture, (reprint)" in *Social Justice* 20:1-2 (Spring-Summer 1993), 107.
[7] Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture," in *Black Popular Culture*, 21-22, 26-31; Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture, (reprint)" in *Social Justice*, 107. For more information on the development of the "highbrow," "middlebrow," and "lowbrow" categories, see, Lawrence L. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988.

of form, a deep and varied attention to speech and orality, rich counter-narratives using structure and writing, and the use of the body as if it was, and it often was, the only cultural capital that Black people had as their canvases of representation.[8] In the arena of popular culture – one where those involved could mobilize cultural strategies to shift and transform dispositions of power in the "wars of position" – African Americans have often discovered that the spaces (of incorporation) to be won were few, carefully regulated and always available at a cost.[9]

Despite the persistent challenges of enslavement and coloniality, music has often been a platform whereupon African American practitioners have produced politically useful art to contest closed racial discourses and extend Black humanity. Stuart Hall argues that black popular culture and the West's fetishistic fascination, recognition and disavowal of Black bodies have always been at the center of its cultural identity crisis.[10] Richard Iton maintains that Black culture has allowed African American musicians to articulate "notions of being that are inevitably within, in conversation with, against and articulated beyond the boundaries of the modern."[11] By creating these "Black Fantastic" moments, Black artists have used culture to nurture potentially subversive forms of interiority that have long been silenced, limited and locked out by discourses of unbeing during enslavement and the afterlives of slavery. Consequently, the Black Fantastic bridges the traditionally political and the cultural by casting that which is often imagined as "unrecognizable as politics" as relevant to political discourse.[12] The Black Fantastic has continually rejected the notion that politics must always be quantifiable, bordered, structured, and disciplined. Rather,

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[8] Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture," in *Black Popular Culture*, 21-22, 26-31; Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture, (reprint)" in *Social*, 107.
[9] Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture, (reprint)" in *Social Justice*, 107.
[10] Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture," in *Black Popular Culture*, 23.
[11] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 16.
[12] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 17.

popular culture, like politics, can embrace disturbance, and sustain slippery frameworks of intention by its creators that act subliminally and/or explicitly.[13]

This chapter explores the long trajectory, patterns, changes and continuities of Black music-making in the United States – particularly as Black artists laboured to work within and against enslavement and the *duppy state*. Hall argues that black popular culture has been constituted from "underlying overdetermination" – that is, inheritances from west and west central Africa and those created as a result of the Middle Passage and diasporic conditions and experiences in the Americas. This underlying overdetermination has often rendered Black culture available for expropriation (due to Black marginality) as it enters the circuits of power and capital. This is often due to the desire among gatekeepers to appropriate and profit from Black expression. As black cultural artefacts pass into the hands of the established cultural bureaucracies, the control that Black artists have over their narratives and representations have varied substantially. Throughout African American history this process has often resulted in cultural products forged through engagement, confluence, synchronization, hybridization, and negotiations from and within dominant and subordinate positions. These processes have occurred through periods of subjugation, contestation, rejection and even tolerance (willing and otherwise). Hall contends that this engagement has produced black popular culture artefacts that always appear different from mainstream culture and therefore 'impure' and continuously under the threat of cooptation or exclusion. Hall maintains that this happens differently across time and space. Therefore, scholars must analyze the signifier "black" with particular attention paid to the historical, cultural and political contexts as well as the changes and continuities that black popular cultures have endured.[14]

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[13] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 11, 16-17.
[14] Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture," in *Black Popular Culture*, 21-22, 26-31.

This chapter argues that while black popular music underwent dynamic cultural transformations since the seventeenth century, these changes occurred within four distinct periods of reupholstered American coloniality where Black artists were subjected to continuous discourses of Black (un)being and anti-black processes. These periods included bondage, and the afterlives of slavery (also defined for this dissertation as the *duppy state*) – Reconstruction, the "old" Jim Crow, and the "new" Jim Crow or mass incarceration within which Rap developed. Throughout these eras, African American musicians used black popular culture, like rappers would, to document the nature of American coloniality; articulate the vast spectrum of their b(l)ack looking relations; contest and expand the discourses that framed, shaped and limited a Black praxis of humanness; and generate a political platform through and in black popular culture. This chapter documents both the transformations across these periods, as well as the subtle nuances within these eras as Black musicians struggled to innovate art for and beyond their communities within largely closed and inaccessible culture industry platforms. These developments set the stage for the quality, structure, and shape of Rap music and how Black musicians articulated, negotiated, rendered visible, and expanded Black narratives in and of the United States and throughout the Black Atlantic.

Black Music Under Bondage and in the Antebellum Era

Under bondage, African Americans – most of whom were enslaved – created secular and spiritual musical forms shaped by a set of ethnically diverse and culturally connected practices and inheritances of west and west central Africans. John Thornton argues that these Black cultural forms were already in the process of being creolized on the shores of the African continent before the departure of slave ships through the Middle Passage. Thornton maintains that music, a "soft"

and malleable aesthetic element of culture, can change rapidly, absorb new ideas, and be managed within the rules of an existing system. In the Atlantic world, black musical expression allowed Africans to preserve their communities, and express change, differences and convergences with the new cultures with which they were in contact.[15] Once the enslaved, free and freed people of African descent were transported into distinct geographic, economic and political American contexts, the music they created was also reflective of and responsive to these contexts, processes of acculturation and creolization, and prolonged contact and encounters with white and indigenous Americans (which produced additional levels of creolization).[16] Black musical expression continued to change due to the pressures of white supremacy, the process of mixing across racial lines, the oppressive nature of enslavement and blackness designated as unbeing.[17]

Within the context of the social, cultural, political and economic interactions and conditions under enslavement, African American communities produced musical techniques and practices that have since been labeled as "secular" or "sacred/spiritual." While musicologists and historians of African American music use the terms "secular" and "sacred/spiritual" to label black music practices, this division is Eurocentric in nature and assumes that Africans practiced one or the other separately. This division is murky given that Africans tended to create and practice secular and spiritual forms alongside one another, and even in the same composition. That is, they might not have necessarily recognized these forms as distinct.[18] Glen Appell, David Hemphill, Matt Vander Woude, and Eileen Southern argue that the African approach to music-making was holistic and made very few distinctions between spiritual practices and everyday life. Music was an integral

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[15] John Thornton, *African and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 313, 363, 391-393.
[16] Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture," in *Black Popular Culture*, 21-22, 26-31.
[17] Martin, "Framing the 'Black' in Black Diasporic Cinemas," 10.
[18] Dena J. Epstein and Rosita S. Sands, "Secular Folk Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35-42, 44.

aspect in the daily practices of black communities, and for almost every activity there was an appropriate musical praxis.[19] Also, the preoccupation among scholars with African American spiritual musical forms that almost singularly revolve around Christianity assumes that enslaved, free and freed people of African descent did not create music outside of this particular religious modality. This scholarly preoccupation fails to archive any examples of black music informed by African or Islamic spiritualties, those spiritual practices outside of Christianity, or a synthesis of religious practices.[20]

Thus far, the techniques and practices that scholars have identified as part of African American secular and spiritual musical vocabulary include a list of vocal, instrumental and body practices that continued through to Rap music. According to Sands and Epstein, vocal techniques included short and repeated phrases, repetitive choruses with a lead singer, the overlapping of leading vocals and chorus, melodic embellishments, and vocal additions such as hums, moans, grunts, and hollers. These vocal addendums were not necessarily classified as conventional vocal sounds. Black musicians also produced instrumentals that stressed the prevalence and centrality of drums and rhythm. This tendency often led to the creation of multi-part rhythmic structures, rhythmic complexities, the practice of syncopation and polyrhythms (that to the untrained and unaccustomed ear might sound like noise), and the use of body percussion in the place of drums by hand clapping, foot stomping and striking various parts of the body.[21] There has also been a tendency among African American vocalists and musicians to use blue notes (sliding and bending

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[19] Glen Appell, David Hemphill and Matt Vander Woude, *North American Popular Music, First Canadian Edition* (Toronto, ON: Nelson Education, 2016), 124.
[20] Sands and Epstein, "Secular Folk Music," 35-42, 44.
[21] Syncopation involves placing rhythmic stresses or accents where they would not normally occur which make part or all of the composition sound off-beat. Syncopation has also been described as an interruption of the regular flow of rhythm which correlates at least two sets of time intervals. Polyrhythms involve simultaneous use of two or more rhythms (one of which is an irrational rhythm) that are played concurrently and do not appear to derive from one another.

across whole note sounds), improvised vocal and instrumental lines, and the call-and-response style as a pattern of democratic participation that fosters dialogue whether it be between and among vocalists, instrumentalists and/or artist(s), and audience members.[22]

Beginning in the seventeenth century, African Americans developed a variety of secular music forms within the context of bondage that formed the foundation of all black musical forms in America including Rap music. Dena J. Epstein, Rosita M. Sands, and Eugene Genovese argue that within chattel slavery conditions, enslaved Africans integrated secular folk music into daily life to experience human pleasure, fleeting recreation during festivities, and regulate the pace of work rhythms. In the context of work, enslaved Africans used music to lessen the monotony of plantation labour, coordinate and regulate patterns and paces, offer rhythm for repetitive chores, communicate messages with their peers, object to and gripe about working conditions, and slow down the pace of plantation labour in acts of protest. Music provided these workers who were transformed into fungible commodities with a language to communicate, coordinate and protest in code. Whether solo and unaccompanied or sung in chorus, these songs were often used to communicate a request, a need, or a series of emotional expressions such as sadness, loneliness, fatigue, pride, defiance or joy in order to ease suffering. Music also served as a momentary reprieve from plantation surveillance, and a tool that the enslaved used to slow down their movements to regain control over their bodies and labour. Music could also serve as a site for monitoring the community and its movements whether during work-hours, as they practiced their faith, or when they enjoyed moments of leisure. During these moments, the enslaved created social songs and syncopated dance music using drums, fiddles, the banjo, and percussion using the body as in the

[22] Sands and Epstein, "Secular Folk Music," 35-42, 44.

case of "patting juba."[23] These moments enabled enslaved communities to convey oral traditions, communal history and daily lessons. The enslaved could also offer one another relief and experience collective pleasure.

Like Rap, the music that the enslaved produced within constricted, hostile and violent psychic and experiential spaces produced a strategic set of looking relations. While the enslaved had severe restrictions, controls, punishments, and denials placed on their right to spectatorship, music created the possibility to look against the grain even if in limited ways. hooks reminds us that while the enslaved had a traumatic relationship to the (white/master) gaze, the violent repression they endured did not necessarily curb their rebellious and courageous desire to 'look' at the nature of power. Looking relations allowed the enslaved to make sense of their circumstances. This gazes also produced space for the enslaved to articulate discontent, impatience, grief or a defiantly human joy while also offering communal care. Even under the most repressive circumstances, looking relations granted the enslaved the space to articulate a praxis of being human.[24] Instead, African Americans used the 'oppositional gaze' to open up the possibility to document, contest and disrupt the structures of domination that shaped their daily lives under bondage.[25]

By the late eighteenth century, African Americans continued to exercise their b(l)ack looking with the Folk Spiritual to produce resistance and resilience. Mellonee V. Burnim argues that the sacred music form of Folk Spirituals represented an overt act of resistance to the subjugation of Europeans. When the enslaved were introduced to Christianity by their oppressors,

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[23] Patting Juba was a practice unique to the United States among the enslaved where performers would accompany clapping and foot stomping with singing and dancing patterns and rhythmic slapping of the body. Rosita M. Sands and Dena J Epstein, "Secular Folk Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35-42, 44; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 323.
[24] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 115-116, 124, 126, 130.
[25] hooks, *Black Looks*, 115-116, 124, 126, 130.

they re-interpreted a well-defined repertoire by applying an African lens to reflect a cultural identity and religious expression shaped by Black experiences and American conditions and contexts. Spirituals reflected three significant thematic desires among the enslaved that included temporal freedom and deliverance, personal and divine revenge, and a plan to resist enslavement both physically and metaphysically. Burnim maintains that Folk Spirituals represented a form of latent and symbolic protest in that the music contained coded, veiled and not quite articulate meanings intended to aid the enslaved transcend their immediate condition. The music also allowed the enslaved to celebrate the divine liberation of the oppressed, articulate deeply held feelings about their condition that they were not ordinarily allowed to verbalize without impunity, and affirm total trust in their deity to ameliorate their current condition in the spiritual world.[26] Russell Sanjek argues that by the late nineteenth century, the aesthetics of Spirituals shifted due to the popularity of a group of African American students who attended Fisk University. These performers, known as the Fisk Jubilee Singers, delivered content to white and Black audiences – though never integrated audiences – that primarily used refined artistry and respectability politics.[27]

Like rappers, Black musicians under bondage used sacred and secular forms to chart and render visible a comprehensive range of Black geographies despite ongoing narratives of unbeing and the possible risk to their lives. While much of the music created under bondage was encoded from the outset, Black musicians used the medium to provide listeners with details about slave society practices, anti-black racism, and white rage. Carol Anderson argues that in the era of enslavement, white rage in America was triggered by black resiliency and the refusal among African Americans to accept subjugation in silence. For those in positions of power, any Black

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[26] Mellonee V. Burnim, "Religious Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51-62.
[27] Russell Sanjek, *American Popular Music and its Business: The First Four Hundred Years, Volume II 1790-1909* (New York: Oxford University Press), 271-272.

person who moved with ambition, resolve and purpose towards a praxis of humanness was met with further subjugation, surveillance and control. These reactions materialized in the form of overworking the enslaved, depriving them of education and recreation, and subjecting them to physical brutality (lashings, beatings, floggings, mutilation and branding), imprisonment, sexual violence, and slave patrols.[28] By using sacred and secular forms, the enslaved widened and pushed to the foreground heterogeneous, alternative, contestational, invisible and even unrecognizable Black geographies. This practice nuanced some segments of the white public's understanding of blackness. These musical forms allowed Black musicians to render visible the nature of Black unbeing and problematize the ways Black non-personhood structured, marked, spatialized and limited black life chances under bondage.[29] This phenomena occurred even as the narrative of a homogenous 'threatening' blackness continued and seemed to be necessary in order to rationalize and justify the ongoing containment of Black people.

As debates over slavery and Black freedom intensified by the 1830s, antebellum whites developed Blackface Minstrelsy to produce meanings of race that soothed prevalent social anxieties about blackness. Blackface Minstrelsy, one of America's first culture industries, was closely linked to the rise of mass circulation press and the nationalization of theatre. The genre translated formal art like Opera into popular forms for 'lowbrow' audiences as in the case of comic skits and variety acts. Eric Lott argues that antebellum whites used Minstrelsy to stage race and carnivalize blackness through the performances of practitioners in blackface makeup made of burnt cork. Minstrelsy extended the practice of associating blackness with unbeing by caricaturing and deriding black modes of speech, song, and dance in the figures of the "Jim Crow" rural rustic and

[28] Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 3-4.
[29] McKittrick, "'Their Blood is There, and They Can't Throw it Out': Honouring Black Canadian Geographies," 29-31.

the "Zip Coon" urban dandy. These representations promoted the popular perception of Black people as unintelligent, lazy, foolish, superstitious and pleasant. Burton W. Peretti argues that Minstrelsy was an articulation of anxiety among urban and northern working-class whites with regards to the social mobility of free Black people.[30] Carol Anderson maintains that the period was also shaped by white anxiety and rage which was triggered by the demands among African Americans for full and equal citizenship in the 1830s abolition movement. Stephanie Dunson suggests that Minstrelsy transformed the very image of African Americans by rendering "real" Black people invisible, obscuring and misrepresenting them, and then privileging those racist representations instead.[31] In essence, Minstrelsy represented a society that "essentially felt compelled to evict Black people from their skin and then allow pretenders to take up residency there."[32]

Minstrelsy also exhibited social and political conflict among the classes. Like Peretti, Lott maintains that Minstrelsy cannot be simplified as a space of white leisure and collective popular desires outside of social and political pressures. Minstrelsy highlighted ruling class attempts to engage in social control, ridicule, domination and the circulation of racist representations of blackness.[33] According to Lewis Erenberg, both progressive and conservative critics of the genre contended that cabaret performances were too informal and relaxed, and the performers exercised

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[30] Burton W. Peretti, *Lift Every Voice: The History of African American Music* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 44-46; Eric Lott, "Blackface and Blackness: The Minstrel Show in American Culture," in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, eds. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 13-14; Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 17-23.
[31] Stephanie Dunson, "Black Misrepresentation in Nineteenth Century Sheet Music Illustration," in *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930*, edited by W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 45-46.
[32] Dunson, "Black Misrepresentation in Nineteenth Century Sheet Music Illustration," 45.
[33] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 44-46; Eric Lott, "Blackface and Blackness: The Minstrel Show in American Culture," 13-14; Eric Lott, *Love & Theft*, 17-23.

far too little control over their "lower nature."[34] Erenberg also complicates these white consumption practices and observances by suggesting that white audiences were also drawn to routines such as "Coon" songs because they imagined black popular entertainment as rebellious and capable of protesting the confines of Victorian culture. For example, the rising popularity of the "impudent coon" caricature presented Black people as those who fought and stole, dressed flamboyantly, used pretentious speech, and were sexually active. These representations of black unbeing mapped blackness as superficial, conceited, aggressive, criminal and predatorial. These performances of blackness provided urban whites with the opportunity to seek out expressions that were contrary to Victorianism while simultaneously reveling in the excitement and fear of Black sexuality. Like Rap music in the late twentieth century, Minstrelsy became an essential site of struggle where the public wrestled over how blackness was conceived of in the public imagination, and which racial representations were used and consumed in mainstream culture.[35]

As one of the first instances of (white) mainstream appropriation in the United States, Blackface Minstrelsy highlighted an unceasing and simultaneous fascination with and fear of blackness. Lott argues that antebellum whites expropriated the cultural commodity of blackness to deride it as well as invoke its power to resist restrictive Victorian conventions.[36] In the context of Black Minstrelsy, white people's fascination with black bodies made Black people socially, politically, economically and sexually attractive and enticing. The artform also produced a level of loathing and anxiety among white people as well. Lott argues that Blackface performances pointed to an obsession among antebellum white men with Black male sexuality, black sexual organs,

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[34] Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), xii-xiii, 73.
[35] Erenberg, *Steppin' Out,* xii-xiii, 73; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 44-46; Lott, "Blackface and Blackness: The Minstrel Show in American Culture," 13-14; Lott, *Love & Theft,* 17-23.
[36] Christina Sharpe, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 17-22, 25-28, 32-36, 48, 57-62, 115-119, 131, 141, 154, 178-179.

bodily display, and the perception that Black men were desirable to white women onlookers and could draw them in with their swagger. For white performers, blackface offered them the potential to travel through a landscape of doubleness where they could play with the collective terror of a supposedly degraded and threatening racialized gender performance, and affection for unrestricted sexuality and 'cool.' In these representations, white Americans most especially embraced a racialized image of otherness where blackness was simultaneously fascinating and posed a constant threat of miscegenation.[37]

Due to these perceptions of blackness, Blackface, like Rap, was also an example of Hall's "wars of position." Lott contends that Minstrelsy's complexity lay in the reality that it was both racial insult and racial envy of Black 'cool' and sexual attractiveness. Lott argues that when white practitioners wore blackface, the practice represented moments of domination over Black bodies and identities. The genre also allowed white artists and audiences to reject repressive Victorian ideals and practices.[38] Dunson contends that for Black wearers of blackface, their challenge was asserting authority and control over the depiction of their bodies and behavior. Unlike Rap, this was difficult for many Black wearers of blackface as they had little control over their representations. Even when they had the opportunity to infuse more humanity into their performances, this was often at a cost. These costs included Black performers isolating themselves from white performers or accepting racist representations on the covers of their authored sheet music in exchange for being published.[39] By using blackface makeup, racist illustrations and stage performances, antebellum whites were able to maintain symbolic, cultural, economic and discursive control over Black people and their representation in these "wars of position."[40]

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[37] Lott, *Love & Theft*, 24-27.
[38] Lott, *Love & Theft*, 24-27.
[39] Dunson, "Black Misrepresentation in Nineteenth Century Sheet Music Illustration," 44, 55, 59.
[40] Lott, *Love & Theft*, 24-27.

With the introduction of Blackface Minstrelsy, the popular music industry asserted control over Black people and public discourses of blackness by narrating black bodies as both a desired and feared alterity. Through performances by Black minstrels, the black body became a surface where regimes of power/knowledge inscribed meaning that were determined by growing debates over slavery and Black freedom.[41] The creators of blackface produced performances that marked the black body as pathological, as well as emboldened with a weaponized sexuality that justified representations of blackness as the embodiment, carrier and ground zero of terror.[42] Black Minstrelsy performances by white minstrels, therefore, became one of the fundamental platforms upon which knowledge and truth claims about blackness were framed as 'real,' even as the art form reduced blackness to caricatures and shells of humanness. The tendency to frame Black bodies in this way meant that unlike rappers, Black wearers of blackface could only present a limited range of Black geographies in the public sphere. W. Fitzhugh Brundage argues that despite these contradictions, many Black entertainers continued to participate in the art form. These practitioners recognized that while Blackface Minstrelsy represented a site of cultural cost, it also provided Black artists with access to the entertainment industry and cultural marketplace.[43]

Black Music Through Reconstruction and Into the Age of "Old" Jim Crow

Following emancipation, Americans dealt with a monumental shift from enslavement to freedom and the potential for Black resistance. Khalil Gibran Muhammad argues that this change led the

[41] Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader,* eds. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London: Sage Publications, London, 2001), 76-78.
[42] Sharpe, *In The Wake*, 19, 37-41, 46-47, 81-82.
[43] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Working in the 'Kingdom of Culture': African Americans and American Popular Culture, 1890-1930," in *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930*, edited by W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 3.

state to focus, discuss, and debate over the intersection of blackness and citizenship.[44] Richard Iton argues that in the wake of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the culture and politics of white supremacy was reconstituted into the *duppy state* – a potent, persistent, intrinsically evil, dead and yet unkillable coloniality.[45] Despite a post-colonial discourse that American enslavement had been eclipsed and transcended by abolition and emancipation, African American experiences indicated that residual and lingering punitive formations of law and order remained. So too did practices that closely resembled the colonial-racial regimes of American plantation slavery, territorial colonization and violent social and spatial segregation such as debt peonage and incarceration. Iton argues that slavery had been reupholstered to subject African Americans to disturbance, disruption, and states of fright.[46] Within this social landscape, those in power mobilized discourses of black criminality to justify the continued subjugation of Black people. Blackness as 'criminal,' 'deviant,' and 'dangerous' became some of the most significant and durable signifiers across the twentieth century through to the development of Rap music. Whiteness, however, continued to be defined as normative. Muhammad contends that during the making of modern urban America, elites relied upon these racial discourses and public transcripts to justify prejudicial thinking, discriminatory treatment, and racial violence as instruments of public safety and control in what would become the beginnings of the carceral state.[47] These processes entailed that black bodies and practices were mapped as problematic and weaponized, and that Black people should be subjected to ongoing terror.

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[44] Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3-4, 7, 20, 273-275.
[45] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 133-136, 200-201.
[46] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 133, 197, 288; Hesse, "Duppy State, Duppy Conqueror: In Search of Black Politics," *Contemporary Political Theory* 14:4 *(2015): 377–378, 386.*
[47] Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3-4, 7, 20, 273-275.

Within this context of increasing criminalization, white people used demeaning performances of blackface as a release valve to articulate their fears about Black freedom and urban spaces. In the late nineteenth century, Americans were preoccupied with the possibilities and dangers presented by urbanization, industrialization, internal migration and immigration (mainly of African Americans and of 'ethnic' whites from nations that were 'less desirable'), and growing racial violence and class conflict due to a fear of 'the other.'[48] Blackface Minstrelsy by Black and white performers capitalized upon these American anxieties that were intimately tied to broader concerns over modernity, migration, citizenship and the intersection of blackness and freedom even as that freedom was circumscribed.[49] Lott argues that elites framed white minstrel performances as harmless communal "safety valves" that deflected attention away from new social realities and paradigms, while also criticizing the current political order of Reconstruction.[50] Burton W. Peretti contends that the authors of blackface performances combatted social fears by using their skits as nostalgia. In these performances, urban living was framed much like it would be in the era of Rap: dangerous, chaotic, pathological and intimately connected to a rebellious black 'cool' and weaponized black sexuality. By comparison, the South was imagined as rural, and therefore idyllic, tranquil and a refuge from urban chaos. Minstrel shows used a nostalgic longing for the South to present the region as the logical solution to the danger presented by modernity and its supposed 'ills.' In these skits, the South was romanticized via images of compassionate and

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[48] Eric Foner argues that at the end of the nineteenth century, approximately 3.5 million newcomers migrated to the United States in search of jobs in the industrial centers of the north and the Midwest. While many arrived from 'traditional' migrant source nations – that is, Ireland, England, Germany, and Scandinavia – over half of this incoming population arrived from Southern and Eastern European nations – particularly Italy and the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. Native-born Americans often racialized these new immigrants by insisting that they were members of "distinct races," whose supposedly lower level of civilization explained everything from their willingness to work for substandard wages to their presumably inherent tendency towards pathology and criminality. For more on migration to America and nativism, see, Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History Brief* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2017), 528-529.
[49] Sanjek, *American Popular Music and its Business,* 214.
[50] Lott, *Love & Theft,* 28, 36

benevolent white "colonels" and "belles," 'devoted' elderly slaves, and 'harmless,' 'lazy' and 'thoughtless' young "pickaninnies" and "coons." Peretti maintains that Minstrelsy's nostalgia reinforced southern pride in the lost Confederate cause, confirmed northern white prejudices against African Americans, and helped both regions overcome the resentment as well as the racial, class and ethnic conflict that followed the Civil War and Reconstruction.[51]

In spite of these demeaning performances of blackface, Minstrelsy provided marginalized Black performers with a significant foothold into the burgeoning music industry. Peretti argues that once music publishing expanded in the north, Minstrelsy became a critical commercial venture for Black and white performers to secure relatively lucrative job opportunities and mainstream appeal and success.[52] For example, untrained white female and Black male and female stage singers and comedians used the Minstrelsy sub-genre of Coon songs to carve out a space in America's expanding music industry market.[53] Lynn Abbott, Doug Seroff and Lori Lynne Brooks argue that these "Coon Shouters" – most famous of whom were white female performers such as Artie Hall, May Irwin, and Mae West – used this form of racial ridicule to promote their comedic talent and parody the incongruity between white femininity and Black masculinity and femininity.[54] African American songwriters, choreographers, staging creators and performers however paid a great cost for exploiting racial stereotypes about African American identity and

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[51] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 44-46; Sanjek, *American Popular Music and its Business,* 214.
[52] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 44-46.
[53] Coon Songs was a genre of music within the Minstrelsy vocabulary that popularized among American audiences between the 1880s and the 1920s. While the genre presented stereotyped images of African Americans, by the turn of the twentieth century African American artists such as composer Bob Cole began criticizing the genre for its racist content. For more information on this subgenre, see Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged but Right: Black Traveling Shows, "Coon Songs," and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).
[54] Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged but Right: Black Traveling Shows, "Coon Songs," and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 4-5, 15; Lori Lynne Brooks, "'To be black is to be funny': 'Coon shouting' and the melancholic production of the white comedienne," *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 25:1 (2015): 2.

life to gain a foothold in the industry. These costs included participating in demeaning discourses of Black unbeing for earnings that were often less than their white counterparts.[55]

Like Minstrelsy, spiritual music genres created opportunities for Black musicians to engage in the music market as well. Beginning in the 1870s, Black artists transformed Folk Spirituals into Arranged Spirituals. This genre, which was first popularized by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1871, was performed for mostly (white) mainstream audiences who attended concert stage performances. Unlike Folk Spirituals, Arranged Spirituals did not privilege improvisation, stylized and communal singing, or the incorporation of dance styles such as the ring shout. Vocalists were also forbidden from including ecstatic verbal and bodily expressions such as screaming, crying and falling to the ground in their performances. Rather, Arranged Spirituals performers added predictability, control, and the absence of overt demonstrative behaviour to their performances.[56] This aesthetic rendered visible an expression of blackness that conformed to accepted European classical music conventions and aesthetics and the cultural values of the white middle and elite classes. Arrangers added multi-part harmony and eliminated many conventions common to the black music-making tradition such as call-and-response, heterophony, and pentatonic scales.[57] Arrangers also steered clear of lyrics that articulated sentiments of despair or protest. This decision significantly limited the ability of Black musicians to use the form to express the full range of their experiences as Black

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[55] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 44-46.
[56] Mellonee V. Burnim, "Religious Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51-62.
[57] Call-and-response is a tradition that enslaved Africans brought with them to the Americas. The technique, which originates among Sub-Saharan African cultures, is a pattern of democratic participation where a performer utters a phrase and a second phrase is offered by another performer or audience members as a direct commentary on or in response to the first statement. Heterophony, which is characteristic of non-Western traditional music, is the simultaneous variation of a single melodic line. For example, a group of performers might sing a simple melody alongside one another but present that melody differently. This might entail changing the rhythm or tempo of the melody or adding embellishments and elaborations to the melody. Finally, pentatonic scales include five notes per octave (the interval between one musical pitch and another with double its frequency). Pentatonic scales are most commonly used in African American Spirituals, Jazz and Blues music (and the genres that flow from it like Rhythm and Blues and Rock) because these scales are useful to musicians who improvise and need to resolve what might appear to be a dissonant sound.

Americans. While approving white audiences credited the Fisk Jubilee Singers with using music to accomplish racial uplift, the ensemble was also confronted with rampant white hostility in trades papers and during performances in the north and south. White patrons also banned the group from staying in quality hotels and entering the front doors where they performed in an effort to discourage cross-country touring.[58]

Another travelling form of music that developed in the 1880s was the Rural Blues from which most contemporary American popular music forms including Rap are derived. Rural Blues evolved from the secular Field Holler and developed across the Deep South in rural and urban areas. According to Burnim and Maultsby, this genre placed great emphasis on individual expression and improvisation and was primarily sung by a lone soloist accompanied by piano or guitar. The Rural Blues took the form of a loose narrative where Black Blues performers articulated personal woes, or those of a character (as in the case of Stagolee) in a world of harsh realities.[59] The Blues combined European elements (multi-phrase strophic form, I-IV-V harmonies, and instrumentation) with the African tradition of the griot, the reinterpretation of African instruments (washboards, jugs, kazoos, and homemade one-stringed zithers), and the rhythmic, tonal and timbral flexibility attributed to African music-making.[60] This innovation produced a number of

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[58] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 37, 39, 42.

[59] Stagolee refers to an 1895 folk ballad about the murder of Billy Lyons by "Stag" Lee Shelton, a Missouri pimp. In the ballad, Shelton was represented as a shadowy and uncertain figure associated with the subcultures of bordellos and prostitution; his identity was closely linked with sex, class, criminality and a defiant and revolutionary way of life. This folk hero was conceived of as dangerous, impulsive, vulgar and daring in his displays of resistance. For more information on Stagolee see, Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), and Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'N' Roll* (New York: Penguin Group, 1990).

[60] Multi-phrase strophic form is common to folk forms of music such as the Blues. This practice involves repeating text in the same rhyme scheme from one stanza to the next. In the Blues, it is often the case that the performer will structure the song in such a way where they use either the same or very similar material from one stanza to the next. In the Blues, this is also known as AAB form which involves two repeated statements (A) and an answer statement (B). I-IV-V harmonies are an example of a chord progression (or a succession of chords) common to Blues music – the most prominent of which is the 12-bar blues. Chord progressions establish a tonality or the "key" of a song and are usually expressed by Roman numerals. In a 12-bar blues, the chord progression might be expressed as I–I–I–I, IV–IV–I–I, V–IV–I–I. For example, if that chord progression were in the key of C major (where the word "major" indicates that a major chord is built on the root note of "C"), the 12-bar blues chord progression would read as: C–

elements commonplace to contemporary popular music. These included blue notes, bending or sliding, the blues scale (the incorporation of the flat third, flat fifth, and flat seventh degrees in a scale), the twelve bar blues, and the AAB form.[61]

Like the African American musical forms that first developed under bondage and those that would later develop in the era of mass incarceration, the Blues told a distinct story about the *duppy state* and Black life under varying states of brutality, trauma, and terror. Clyde Woods argues that the architects of the Blues witnessed a series of transformations in quick succession from enslavement to tenuous freedom.[62] In the Blues listeners heard laments about racial segregation, black voting disenfranchisement, vigilante terrorism, personal demons and the interpersonal and intersectional dynamics of working-class and working-poor Black life.[63] Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Blues content began to shift in subtle ways due to the Great Migration. As African Americans migrated to cities in the Northeast and Midwest such as Chicago and New York City, Blues content modified from a largely rural to urban narrative.[64] Increasingly, the genre incorporated narratives about segregation and legally enforced second-class status in urban spaces alongside existing accounts of unbeing. What remained a constant was the Blues' capacity to serve as an artistic space where musicians mobilized the oppositional gaze to reflect on

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C–C–C, F–F–C–C, G–F–C–C. Understanding chord progressions is essential in the mastery of building a Blues (and Jazz) repertoire as musicians are often required to quickly transpose chord progressions into new/different keys.

[61] A bent or blue note is a note that is sung or played at a slightly altered pitch (between a quartertone and a semitone) than standard for expressive purposes. Blue notes are commonly used in songs where the author intends to convey a "blue" or sad feeling. The technique of bending a note or sliding between notes involves slowly shifting up or down towards a new pitch. For more on the Blues see, David Evans, "Blues," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 79-82; Portia K. Maultsby, "The Evolution of African American Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), xxiv.

[62] Clyde Woods, "Sittin' on Top of the World: The Challenges of Blues Geography and Hip Hop Geography," in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place,* eds. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007), 55, 73.

[63] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 74, 85.

[64] R.A Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture: The Blues and Black Southerners*, *1890-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 1-2; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 74, 85.

the oppressive nature of white supremacy, Christian restraint, and bourgeois pragmatism and propriety, while also opening up space to render visible alternative Black geographies.[65]

Like Rap, the Blues was both a response to the afterlives of slavery and an attempt to render knowable Black interiorities amid the competing discourses of Black unbeing. Clyde Woods argues that the Blues' massive archive of travelogues is evidence that the genre functioned as a platform whereby Black artists located, identified and bound specific socio-political phenomena in a coherent spatial frame. These songs helped musicians map and stretch out alternative narratives of Black being by discussing Black working-class realities or articulating various modes of heartache, love, and refuge. As one of the central institutions of working class African American life, the Blues was a conscious recodification of Black geographies, knowledge, and soundscapes with the intent to investigate and interpret social phenomena and foster group cohesion. Woods contends that Blues musicians did so while also constructing and organizing "communities of consciousness," and articulating personal and collective experiences and values. Like rappers, Blues musicians shrouded their experiential knowledge throughout lyrics in metaphors, ever-evolving terminology and turns of phrase, black vernacular, triple entendres and misdirection. Woods maintains that the Blues was and continues to be one of the key and foundational sites of knowledge production, revision, method and praxis that has since extended to Rap music. As Blues musicians detailed, coded, translated and periodized post-1865 Black geographies to American audiences, they rendered visible and knowable African American histories beyond post-American slavery discourses of unbeing.[66]

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[65] Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture,* 1-2; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 74, 85.
[66] Woods, "Sittin' on Top of the World: The Challenges of Blues Geography and Hip Hop Geography," 54, 59-60, 68, 70.

Much like Rap music, Blues performances and narratives granted musicians space to articulate a range of Black geographies that captured the nuances of gender and sex within black communities. Woods argues that this was possible due to the mainstream market's embrace of blueswomen. That is, while most blues singers were Black men, female Blues singers had greater access to vaudeville markets and the support of major record labels. As a result, blueswomen rather than bluesmen were the first to experience large-scale commercial and cross-racial acclaim through recordings, vaudeville performances in large venues, and instrumental ensembles.[67] Angela Y. Davis argues that blueswomen used this platform to articulate a proto-feminist working class consciousness that incorporated sentiments typically imagined as male such as artistic prowess, a language of power, subversive tricksterism, and a sense of anger, rage and frustration. Blueswomen used this platform to operationalize their b(l)ack looking and disarticulate the nature of their unique oppression which was informed by the intersection of their Black, female and at times even queer experiences. Davis maintains that blueswomen used their platform to tell stories about romantic and sexual desire, abandonment and abuse. They also contested gender expectations, created counter-narratives about female subordination, exercised agency and established a public critique regarding gender violence and domestic abuse.[68] Black male performers on the other hand, were largely semi-professional itinerant songsters who crisscrossed the nation via railways and rivers playing far less commercial venues than their female counterparts. Bluesmen sang about escaping Jim Crow in order to avert sharecropping, economic hardship and the vigilante violence characteristic of the American South. R.A Lawson and David Evans argue that amid hardening white resistance to African American social and economic progress, the Blues was framed by elites

[67] Woods, "Sittin' on Top of the World: The Challenges of Blues Geography and Hip Hop Geography," 58.
[68] Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 127, 155-156, 160, 164; Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 22-27.

as countercultural due the supposedly restless and licentious lifestyles of its artists and the genre's tendency to communicate through its veiled and coded lyrics.[69]

As the Blues garnered a greater foothold in the music industry, evidence of widening professional possibilities for Black artists was perhaps most evident in early twentieth century travelling Black comedy shows. Abbott and Seroff argue that in the southern states, elites frequently limited the access that Black performers had to mainstream theatres. Venue owners did so in an attempt to curb the popularity of Black minstrel performers and privilege the work of their white counterparts. These anti-black practices incentivized Black artists to respond to and add a new variety of African American minstrel show to their repertoire called "under canvas." This genre peaked in the 1910s and survived through to the late 1950s. "Under canvas" was a form of travelling theatre that involved a street parade, marching band, a game of baseball, a minstrel show, a musical farce-comedy, open-air evening concerts and a ballyhoo.[70] As Black artists cultivated new professional opportunities, they also resisted and challenged the dominant order of the culture industry. These artists created largely Black-led productions arranged for the enjoyment of segregated audiences. Abbott and Seroff maintain that black musical comedy, or what was also labeled the Minstrel variety show, showcased Black performers' capacity to create reliably financed and elaborately staged and costumed productions. While these performers were responding to various ecologies of anti-black racism, they were also creating artistic avenues where Black stars could exercise considerable creative control within a restrictive industry.[71]

African American musicians also sought out work opportunities and access to mainstream audiences by joining American circus sideshow tents where they served as bandleaders and

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[69] Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture*, 1-2; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 74, 85.
[70] A ballyhoo was a noisy attention-getting performance.
[71] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right*, 38, 209-210.

minstrel stage show performers. Between the 1890s and 1910s, the American circus provided Black performers with access to a broader mainstream audience due to two reasons. First, white audiences demanded that Black artists were to be added to performances. Second, given that these performances were profitable, a number of financial mechanisms were developed to facilitate the creation of original all-Black musical comedy road productions. Many of these initiatives were heavily bankrolled by white theatrical investors, drew large crowds, and employed crews of nearly sixty Black entertainers at a time. And yet, it was usually the case that Black musicians were segregated into race-specific bands that rarely played under the main circus tent. They were usually hired to entertain audiences during accompanying Minstrel sideshows, or in an "after concert" that the audience typically paid a small admission fee. In addition to playing music, Black artists were also hired to work as acrobats, wire walkers, and magicians. In many instances, these performers faced health risks and bodily injury as a result of working with animals, and amid train wrecks, fires, and tents caving in due to heavy winds.[72] Despite an increase in Black employability and employment in the popular culture terrain, the regularity with which these performers faced social and physical peril suggested that Black life in the circus and more broadly continued to be treated with little care.

By the 1890s, public nightlife in a number of American cities expanded to include new forms of entertainment, amusements, expressions of sexuality and social styles that prioritized black popular culture. Lewis A. Erenberg argues that as African Americans began moving to American cities in more significant numbers due to the Great Migration, black popular culture came into greater contact with aspects of white American culture in cabarets, dance halls, and sporting houses. And yet, Abbott and Seroff seem to suggest that what Erenberg has ascribed to

[72] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right,* 6-7, 12, 158, 173, 207.

urbanization was already occurring with the introduction of touring circus shows. By the 1910s, many public establishments in urban spaces, including illicit male-centric districts at the bottom of the social order, were transformed into respectable cultural spaces that men and women could enjoy. As patterns of interracial cultural consumption increased, Black and white performers used dance and musical performance to challenge the contemporary social, cultural and sexual standards, attitudes and behaviors of the American public.[73]

At the turn of the twentieth century, these social and cultural changes were most evident with the introduction of the African American musical form of Ragtime. In the 1890s, this dance-based vernacular music developed into three primary forms. The first form, instrumental rags, included instrumentals that were altered from their original texts by applying Ragtime playing techniques. The other two forms included Ragtime songs and syncopated waltzes.[74] In each case, instrumentalists, namely pianists, played an un-notated, improvised, embellished and syncopated melody with their right hands, and a recurring walking bass line pattern with their left hand.[75] In Ragtime's earliest days, talented young Black pianists would gravitate to less genteel segregated urban settings such as brothels, saloons, and taverns to find employment because they would often encounter formidable discrimination and segregation in middle class and elite conservatories and concert halls. These spaces were perhaps also less concerned with policing artistic form which

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[73] Erenberg, *Steppin' Out,* xii-xiii, 73.

[74] The increasing availability of inexpensive upright pianos led Black artists to replace the banjo as their preferred instrument. Unlike the banjo, the piano was better equipped to translate the techniques associated with the increasingly popularized Ragtime style. The piano granted Ragtime credibility and expanded its melodic, harmonic and rhythmic complexity. The piano enabled Ragtime pianists to provide melody and harmony, while also executing an accompanying bass pattern and maintaining the traditional timbres, polyrhythms, and polymeters traditional to the genre. In Ragtime, the rhythmic juxtaposition of the two hands is what created the contrast and tension specific to the genre. And yet, the piano also had disadvantages in that it was not portable, it was not affordable for the working classes, and it could not render the vocalisms and glissandi (gliding from one pitch to another) typical of African American music. For additional information on the importance of the piano in Ragtime, please see, Sanjek, *American Popular Music and its Business,* 298, and John Edward Hasse, "Ragtime: From the Top," in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music*, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Schirmer, 1985), 11-15.

[75] John Edward Hasse, "Ragtime: From the Top," in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music*, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Schirmer, 1985), 2-4, 16.

meant that artists could explore their individual creativity. As Ragtime was increasingly accepted into genteel spaces, the genre's notation changed and practitioners added harmonic modulation, rich chord progressions, and technical virtuosity. As practitioners implemented these changes, Ragtime's audience broadened to include affluent and middle class whites.[76]

Like Minstrelsy before it, and most every other black popular music form throughout the twentieth century, Ragtime's mainstream popularity generated white anxieties over black sexuality and the mixing of racially segregated audiences. By the turn of the twentieth century, the (white) mainstream was increasingly fascinated by Ragtime's innovation. Fans and critics enjoyed Ragtime's syncopated rhythm, inherent percussiveness, and challenge to formal structure. Ragtime's additive rhythms and rhythmic dislocations sounded novel and 'exotic' to white audiences, even as its rhythmic changes were critiqued for being 'irregular' and rejecting the equal-beat structure common to most European-American compositions. These challenges to western musical form were compounded by the interracial mixing of Ragtime's audience in cabaret spaces and the supposed re-making of Black artists into "dignified" performers. [77] Burton Peretti argues that as white audiences mingled with Black performers and consumed black popular culture, Ragtime allowed performers and audiences to trouble ridged rules regarding behavior, morality, and public leisure formalities. These interactions drew attention to the interracial dimensions of consuming black culture in multi-racial urban nightlife social spaces. As had been the case with Minstrelsy, several critics took issue with the physical proximity of the races in cabaret spaces – particularly when Black men mingled with white women. These concerns marked yet another instance when white contemporaries expressed fear and anxiety over the potential for interracial

[76] Ingeborg Harer, "Ragtime," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 127-131; Maultsby, "The Evolution of African American Music," xxiv; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 58-63.
[77] Hasse, "Ragtime: From the Top," 16.

intimacies, as well as a deep preoccupation with the discourse of predatory Black male sexuality and white female fragility. These anxieties often resulted in Black performers facing artistic restrictions or job insecurity.[78]

Like Rap music, while Ragtime's Black authors faced some prohibitions, the genre's transformative qualities ensured a degree of cross-racial and inter-generational appeal that made it one of America's foundational music genres. John Edward Hasse argues that like many black popular music forms to follow, Ragtime was a racially diverse youth music that was consumed by a multi-racial audience, and authored by composers who ranged between the ages 17 and 25. While the majority of Ragtime's performers were Black and its recognized composers tended to be white, its two most popular auteurs – Scott Joplin and James Scott – were African American. Hasse argues that there are three reasons Black Ragtime composers did not get published as frequently as their white counterparts. First, most African American Ragtime composers lacked the formal training necessary to notate sheet music. This skill was vital because it provided the primary means of disseminating Ragtime to the American mainstream and gaining earnings from publishers. Hasse suggests that without notation, Ragtime might have been lost to the written record, and only sustained through memorization and when practitioners learned it by ear. Second, Black Ragtime artists devoted most of their energy to interpreting already existing mainstream compositions. Finally, African American Ragtime authors dealt with widespread racial discrimination from American music industry publishers.[79] Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff argue that while Ragtime startled American sensibilities with its performance of Black working class identities, experiences, and sensibilities, it formed the bedrock upon which twentieth century American popular music was

[78] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 58-63; Harer, "Ragtime," 127-131; Maultsby, "The Evolution of African American Music," xxiv.
[79] Hasse, "Ragtime: From the Top," 17-22.

built. Even as Black musicians faced exploitative business practices, discriminatory journalistic criticism in the north, and violent racial antagonisms and prohibitions in the south, Ragtime artists garnered many mainstream opportunities to disseminate their art and widen their professional possibilities.[80]

"Old" Jim Crow and Black Music in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

In the first half of the twentieth century as Jazz developed into what would be America's 'classical music,' debates over its artistic merit gestured to the ongoing denigration of Black invention. Developed in New Orleans, Jazz was typically performed in bands that varied in size from three to twelve members. Artists usually improvised collectively, and mastered traditional European-American band instruments while also developing their advanced playing techniques and melodies. Peretti maintains that a key component of the New Orleans sound was that it regularly included blue notes and blues harmonies into performance.[81] The genre's hallmarks also included improvisation, syncopation, new rhythmic interpretations such as the 'swing' technique, harmonic complexity, and the virtuosity and sophistication of its performers and composers. While large and appreciative audiences supported New Orleans' technically skilled and innovative Jazz musicians, local journalists and non-Jazz musicians criticized the genre for its supposedly loud and discordant sounds, and for questioning established (white) social norms vis-à-vis the use of the double entendres and open sexual references.[82]Abbott and Seroff contend that as a result of these public

[80] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right*, 3.
[81] Ingrid Monson, "Jazz: A Chronological Overview," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, edited by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 145-148; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 87-88.
[82] The 'swing' technique transformed a basic march beat into a slow drag and up-tempo strut. Monson, "Jazz: A Chronological Overview," 145-148; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 87-88.

discourses, gatekeepers and media largely imagined Jazz as supposedly immoral, suggestive, primitive and subversive.[83]

Like the genres that preceded it, Jazz developed amid the *duppy state* climate of New Orleans' rigid Jim Crow segregation and recurring ethnic and racial violence. As the American south's major port, New Orleans attracted a large number of internal migrants (rural Black and white migrants from the Mississippi River Delta), as well as immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe (most notably the Irish and Italians). Distinct Black, white and creole social spheres developed as a result of the cultural presence, mixture, and influence of the French and Spanish, an influx of Latinx, Caribbean and European immigrants, and the presence of Creole communities. This confluence of cultural influences meant that while a number of Jazz's techniques were firmly rooted in the African music-making tradition, and at nearly every stage of its development its most significant innovators were African American, Jazz was not entirely African American music. Rather, like Rap music, Jazz was a genuinely Black Atlantic form.[84] Peretti maintains that the genre's development was also hugely shaped by New Orleans' anti-black culture that limited the inclusion of some and outright excluded others. For example, during Jim Crow, Black Jazz audiences and performers were largely barred from public cultural events like Mardi Gras. Instead, they joined informal "second line" parades behind white marchers. Even Creoles of color found that they were relegated to second-class social status alongside other Black Louisianians as a result of de jure segregation.[85] By the 1890s, this combination of ethnic and

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[83] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right*, 7.
[84] Monson, "Jazz: A Chronological Overview," 147; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 81-82.
[85] Sybil Kein argues that before the nineteenth century, Creoles of colour were a distinct ethnic group of mixed-raced individuals (of European, African, and Native American ancestry) who were identified as free persons of colour in the former French and Spanish colonies of Louisiana, Southern Mississippi, Alabama, and Northwestern Florida. And yet, colonial documents demonstrate that the term 'Créole' was used in different periods and contexts to refer to a variety of ethnic and racial categories including those read as white (born in the colony rather than France), mixed-race and visibly black people (including those who were enslaved). Burton W. Peretti argues that while Creoles of Colour covered a broad racial spectrum, many of them were virtually white-skinned. For more information on this

racial clashes and diversity produced a Jazz style that combined New Orleans' rich heritage of Opera and dance orchestras, the sounds of Mexican and Caribbean migrants, French solfège, the classical music virtuosity of Creole bands, and the bluesy brass and string band tradition of African Americans.[86]

As in the case of Rap music, the confluence of sound and performance styles in Jazz music was also a source of spirited debate among Black intellectuals who were troubled by its creative output and representations of blackness. Phillipe Charles maintains that W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain LeRoy Locke argued that the genre was "licentious" and that it reflected an artist's decision to prioritize entertainment over the project of racial uplift. By the 1910s, discourses over whether Jazz could uplift the race began to shift as the public claimed Jazz as "America's classical music."[87] Peretti argues that this decision was the result of Jazz pioneers tailoring the New Orleans Jazz aesthetic to the needs of a northern audience in the "hot" Jazz style. With its rich blues-like improvisatory harmonies and timbres, "hot" Jazz became the wellspring of the entire mainstream Jazz instrumental and vocal tradition. The genre challenged musicians to create bolder improvisations and ornamentations as in the case of "stride" piano and "scat" vocals, and it introduced a spirit of cultural rebellion that was alien to dominant European models of leisure, and the formalities of comportment and movement.[88]

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identity term and historical category, see, Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), and Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 81-82.

[86] French solfège is the practice of do-re-mi note learning and singing. Monson, "Jazz: A Chronological Overview," 147; Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 81-82.

[87] Peretti, Lift Every Voice, 83; Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right*, 7; Phillipe Carles and Jean-Louis Comolli, *Free Jazz/Black Power*, translated by Gregory Pierrot (Oxford, MS: The University of Mississippi Press, 2015), 3.

[88] Stride piano refers to a style of playing where the performer uses their right hand to play the melody while their left hand plays a single bass note or octave on the strong beat and a chord on the weak beat. Scat vocals are improvisational melodies and rhythms where the vocalist uses the voice as an instrument rather than a speaking medium, and the sound they produce includes wordless vocables and/or nonsense syllables. Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 85-86.

Between the turn of the twentieth century and 1930, in addition to the creation of the genre of Jazz, Black musicians also elaborated upon their spiritual music vocabulary with the introduction of Gospel, and in doing so mapped, to an even higher degree, Black geographies in the "old" Jim Crow era. Mellonee V. Burnim argues that Gospel music was a transitional genre that combined elements of the Folk Spiritual and the new approaches to black religious music. In the early twentieth century, Gospel took three forms. First, the Tindley style was a gospel hymn variety pioneered by Charles Albert Tindley in Philadelphia. Tindley pioneered a style that included hymns of European origin translated through the written score, piano and organ accompaniment. His technique showcased the prevalence of the verse-chorus structure, and space for the interpolation and improvisation of the text using the thirds and sevenths as in the Blues. The Tindley style represented the first instance of shaping the melody, harmony, and rhythm of religious music in ways that combined the black folk and popular music tradition. The second form, Rural Gospel, emerged as a sacred counterpart to the Rural Blues. This form was typically sung by solo vocalists, accompanied by an acoustic guitar or harmonica, and characterized by minimal chord changes and variable rhythmic structures. The final approach, the Holiness-Pentecostal Style, embraced an expressive style that was uninhibited, celebratory and highly demonstrative. Congregants exuberantly clapped their hands, shouted in call-and-response and danced along to the instrumental accompaniment of trombones, trumpets, and mandolins. These were instruments that were typically shunned by some traditional Baptist and Methodist institutions. As practitioners played this style, they expressed the joy of living and worshipping alongside congregants on their own terms. In doing so, African Americans entered into an imaginative space where they could contest the seemingly fixed and closed discourses of black

unbeing that Christianity supported and justified.[89] These sacred music practices also allowed African Americans to generate new transgressive possibilities and subjectivities that reflected well-ingrained African practices by producing music that rejected the sacred/secular binary.

Gospel music also provided African Americans with a medium to create resistive practices of communal care against the persistent violence of the *duppy state*. On Sundays in the urban North, former southerners felt comfortable, accepted and at home in hundreds of small and intimate storefront churches that sprang up in many American cities. Robert Darden argues that exhausted and discouraged congregants found great refuge and healing in these spaces after working long hours in unfavourable job conditions. He contends that Pentecostal/Holiness churches and their associated expressions filled Black life with hope and restoration, raised congregants out of despair, and gave African Americans a few Sunday hours to escape their daily realities. Whether in the rhythmic chanting and clapping, foot stomps, or the charismatic preaching, basement and storefront churches offered African Americans a space to engage in an ecstatic musical release and become enraptured with the Holy Spirit. Congregants also found novel ways to sing their praises to God by integrating these sacred sounds with the motifs and melodies of popular genres like Ragtime, Blues, and Jazz.[90]

While Gospel offered African Americans the chance to heal, Jazz music granted Black musicians increased social and economic opportunity. By the 1920s, Jazz had shifted from an

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[89] Burnim, "Religious Music," 67-68; African Americans moved from the American south in what has since been termed as the Great Migration for a variety of reasons, some of which included fleeing systematic lynchings and abject poverty resulting from the sharecropping system. Other reasons included disenfranchisement at the polls via legislation, poll tax, the grandfather clause or Ku Klux Klan intimidation, and inadequate or poor educational opportunities and health care. Southerners were also impacted by several environmental factors such as the boll weevil infestations and flooding. As a result, northern industrialists were granted access to a cheap and reliable workforce – many of whom fled from Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. For more information on the Great Migration, please see, Robert Darden, *People Get Ready!: A New History of Black Gospel Music*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), 131-133.

[90] Robert Darden, *People Get Ready! A New History of Black Gospel* Music (New York: Continuum, 2004), 138-140.

exclusively local performance music for stage audiences, to radio-friendly "race music" on segregated airwaves.[91] Peretti maintains that Jazz granted Black musicians, particularly those of middle class social status, the ability to seek prestige on the concert stage and travel nationally and internationally. In instances where recording royalties were low and Black artists were met with segregated radio, they opted to journey via train, bus, or car to perform in dance halls and nightclubs for short and long-term residencies. Black musicians were also hired as writers and song pluggers by Tin Pan Alley in single contract arrangements to promote industry products and increase their visibility and selling capacity. Jazz became their ticket to respectability, high level achievement, and prosperity among a largely non-African American and European public. As Jazz musicians earned greater national and international acclaim from non-Black and Black audiences alike for the intellectual quality of Jazz, they extended the reach of Black musical expression. In doing so, Jazz artists helped transform (white) public attitudes about race, art, and ability. Like late twentieth century Rap, Jazz offered African Americans entrepreneurial opportunities that included expanding black artists' music publishing and show contracting opportunities. By the 1920s, prominent figures such as George W. Broome formed a phonography company (Special Phonograph Records), Harry Pace opened Black Swan Records, and prominent bandleaders like Duke Ellington and Count Basie garnered higher incomes and international acclaim. A decade later, Jazz, which like Rap was initially considered a temporary and trivial fad, had outlasted and eclipsed the popularity and cultural influence of other contemporary art forms such as Harlem Renaissance literature which had fallen into obscurity.[92]

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[91] The term "race music" or otherwise known as "race records," refers to early twentieth century recordings (particularly between the 1920s through to the 1940s) that were made exclusively by and for African American audiences.
[92] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 81-82, 88, 95, 103; Sanjek, *American Popular Music and its Business,* 33.

Despite these transformations, Black Jazz musicians faced many social, economic and spatial challenges rooted in anti-black racism that limited their social and artistic mobility. In terms of their finances, musicians often dealt with paymasters who might cancel engagements or fail to deliver payments. This practice eventually led to high-to-moderate turnover in personnel or band members. There were also instances when Jazz musicians were required to travel on long road trips that resulted in family tensions, particularly with spouses or partners who were left behind.[93] African American musicians also continued to endure white hostility and violence due to "threatening blackness" discourses concerning job competition and housing shortages which exacerbated already present Jim Crow segregation and discrimination practices. Peretti argues that white hostility led to Black musicians being excluded from spaces exclusively reserved for white patrons. Hostile whites often insisted that the performers remain in segregated backstage locations or enter performance spaces from backdoor entrances.[94] As a result, many travelling musicians toured with a copy of the "green book" in hand. This guide helped African American travelers find accommodations, restaurants, and gas stations that would serve them.[95] This resource was particularly useful because Black musicians often felt pressure from white patrons and local white populations to lodge with families in nearby black neighbourhoods since most 'reputable' hotels, nightclubs, theater owners and restaurants refused to serve Black patrons and visiting musicians.

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[93] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 90-92.
[94] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 91.
[95] *The Negro Motorist Green Book* (also known as *The Negro Motorist Green-Book, The Negro Travelers' Green Book*, or simply the *Green Book*) was a guidebook initially published by African American New York City mailman Victor Hugo Green for Black road trippers. The text was published during the era of Jim Crow laws when open and often legally prescribed discrimination against African Americans (in particular) and other non-whites was widespread. Green wrote this text to outline the places and services that were friendly towards African Americans. For more information on the *Green Book*, see, "Negro Motorist Green Book, An International Travel Guide, 1949," *The Henry Ford Collection*, https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/197682#slide=gs-200259 (accessed April 10, 2019).

And in southern venues where seating was carefully segregated, Black musicians also experienced taunting and threats of violence from white hecklers.[96]

Black Jazz musicians also dealt with exploitative social and economic instances of cultural appropriation that normalized genre theft and expropriated black labour. By the 1930s, white Americans were infatuated with Jazz. This phenomenon was remarkably similar to how white audiences embraced and commercially exploited Minstrelsy in the century prior. According to Peretti, *Down Beat* magazine reported that white Jazz practitioners like Paul Whiteman, Benny Goodman, and George Gershwin regularly received critical praise, higher pay, and longer engagements than their Black counterparts. White Jazz musicians also stayed in better hotels while touring and they could walk through the front doors of the club halls where they performed. This preferential treatment occurred with high frequency. Some white and Black cultural critics even voiced their concern over these discrepancies, particularly regarding the higher earnings of white bandleaders. Critics questioned white Jazz musician's ability to play Jazz in the same way that African Americans could, as they believed that the music was somehow inherent to Black instrumentalists.[97]

In response to the threat of co-optation, cultural appropriation and exploitation, Black musicians developed new Jazz sub-genres such as Bebop which explicitly promoted a pro-Black aesthetic and politics. Philippe Carles and Jean-Louis Comolli maintain that beginning in the 1940s, Jazz underwent a series of radical turns that presented alternative aesthetics and instrumental practices with the implicit and explicit intent of rejecting the prophylactic state's whitening, mainstreaming and erasure of Jazz's racialized history.[98] Rosenthal provides three

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[96] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 91.
[97] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 94-95.
[98] By the second World War, Jazz's future was largely shaped by gifted young musicians from underprivileged urban settings who would go on to invent nearly twenty sub-genres such as: Bebop, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Dixieland

reasons for this outcome through the example of Bebop.[99] First, Black musicians were attempting to protect Black Jazz from mainstream dilution and genre theft. Second, Black practitioners remade Jazz by rejecting excessive codification and snubbing respectability in favor of bohemianism. By the 1950s, they also began taking on the dress code of European literary intellectuals who promoted radicalized ways of being as an oppositional politics. These artists often wore berets, goatees, and horn-rimmed glasses. Third, Beboppers used black looking relations to comment on the conservative nature of American culture and the contradictions and limits of Black freedom. Finally, Beboppers chose to promote Jazz players, especially Black artists, as serious musicians rather than mere performers. Rosenthal claims that this decision reflected a desire and, at the very extreme, an outburst of Black rage and denial over the humiliating sense of being undervalued as artists due to anti-black sentiments and discourses of non-personhood.[100]

Within the context of a burgeoning Civil Rights Movement in the 1940s, Jazz was dramatically transformed by the US war effort and the demands placed on Black musicians to promote conceptions of freedom and the nation. On the home front, a number of big bands dealt with high turnover as musicians left to serve abroad. Record labels also incurred increasing travel costs due to artist touring, and a two-year-long ban instituted by the musicians union which was

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Revival, Cool Jazz, West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Modal Jazz, Free Jazz, Latin Jazz, Post-Bop, Soul Jazz, Jazz Fusion, Jazz Funk, Smooth Jazz, Acid Jazz, Nu Jazz, Jazz Rap, Punk Jazz and Jazzcore. Carles and Comolli, *Free Jazz/Black Power*, x, 3; 26.

[99] Rosenthal argues that Bebop did away with the formal, melodic, and rhythmical limits of mainstream Jazz by privileging vibratoless intonation and instrumentation, off-center rhythms, splintered phrasing, fast tempos, complex harmonies, intricate melodies, and steady, angular and complex rhythms set out by the bass and the drummer's ride cymbal. Bebop gained currency among white subculture audiences — namely those labeled white 'renegades,' 'bohemians,' and artists and writers of the "beat" generation such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. Other genres, as in the case of Hard Bop, sustained popularity in exclusively black neighborhoods, particularly Black urban teens who enjoyed the genre's expressive and cathartic articulations of the bleak and tormented black urban experience. For more on Bebop and Hard Bop, see, David H. Rosenthal, *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music, 1955-1965* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 26-30, and Carles and Comolli, *Free Jazz/Black Power*, x, 3; 26.

[100] Rosenthal, *Hard Bop*, 33-35, 40.

the result of a bitter and drawn out dispute over the issue of royalties.[101] This happened just as wages for Black workers increased (even as they were still disproportionately low paying and hazardous), and millions gained wartime employment and technical skills in factories across the United States. Among African American Jazz musicians who decided to serve in the war, very few were able to use their talents overseas. Peretti maintains that all-white service bands were given prominent positions over skilled Black Jazz musicians. Black artists were often segregated to all-black service bands and rarely if ever promoted in the American mass media for their contributions to the cultural component of the war effort. Though Black Jazz musicians were rarely if ever allowed to play, their military service also exposed them to greater racial tolerance abroad. Their service also inspired their creativity and nuanced their national and resistive politics and conception of freedom within the borders of the United States.[102]

Like rappers, Jazz musicians used their artistic platform to articulate various political positions on the subject of race and inequity. Peretti argues that African American Jazz musicians engaged in local, regional, national, international and transnational social justice efforts that tackled Black issues of unbeing, freedom, and anti-blackness. For example, in the American north, Black people were often subjected to widespread substandard school and city services, as well as discrimination by employers, landlords and home sellers who refused to hire Black workers and

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[101] The 1942-1944 musicians' strike (which began on August 1, 1942 and is considered the longest strike in entertainment history) involved a strike by the American Federation of Musicians against the major American recording companies due to disagreements over royalty payments. Beginning at midnight on July 31st 1942, union musicians were not allowed to make commercial recordings in a recording session for any commercial record company – this had a detrimental effect on big bands and instrumental musicians. The strike ended in November 1944 – though this was not the end of the royalty dispute. The new medium of television presented similar concerns, and a similar strike was called in 1948, which ended on December 14, 1948 and lasted nearly a year. Many African American artists working with small specialty labels benefitted from this strike in that much of the idle recording and manufacturing equipment was used to put musicians who were not under contract to work with enterprising music promoters, record distributors, and store owners. Such was the case with labels such as Savoy and Apollo. For more information on the musicians' strike, see, Lawrence McClellan Jr., *The Later Swing Era: 1942 to 1955* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004).

[102] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 98.

excluded Black renters and buyers. In response, musicians held "rent parties" where attendees were required to contribute financially in the form of admission fees. The collected funds would later be put towards helping struggling residents pay their expenses.[103] Jazz critics, promoters and practitioners also used the genre to articulate a cautious liberalism that conflated their appreciation of the Roosevelt administration, their experiences as racialized Americans, and their interactions with other political ideologies. For example, some Black musicians donated their talents at NAACP and US Communist Party fundraising events intended to lobby for labour and civil rights legislation and/or legal defense. Others became involved with socialist or communist blocs as in the case of Teddy Wilson and Dizzy Gillespie.[104] Others still used Jazz in public spaces to articulate radical political positions as in the case with Billie Holiday who famously performed "Strange Fruit" in 1939. The performance was understood as an anti-lynching song for leftist artists and multiracial audiences and intellectuals.[105] By mobilizing their artistic capital in this way, many Black musicians used the terrain of popular culture to operationalize their oppositional gaze and address Black unbeing and the complex modes and mechanisms of the *duppy state*.

Black Music in the Early Civil Rights Era

By the post-WWII era, demographic and culture industry transformations facilitated the growth of Rhythm and Blues and a series of new pathways of music industry access and visibility for African American musicians. Rhythm and Blues was a genre that was primarily shaped by urban sensibilities, sentiments, and realities. It flourished among urban African American audiences in

[103] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 92-93.
[104] For example, Teddy Weatherford traveled and worked overseas for years in the Philippines, China, and India and endorsed socialism while doing so, and Dizzy Gillespie spent some time at the Communist Party's summer gathering (Camp Unity) in upstate New York. For more information on their contributions, see, Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 90, 94.
[105] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice*, 92-95.

cities such as Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, Nashville, Houston, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Detroit. In 1948 *Billboard Magazine* coined the term "Rhythm and Blues" and replaced "race music" – the official descriptor of the black popular music industry chart in the first half of the twentieth century – with this new genre term. Rhythm and Blues was characterized by lyricism that focused on the triumphs and failures associated with relationships, sex, aspirations, economics and freedom.[106] By the 1950s, the genre was also predominantly mass marketed towards an urban African American audience with interests in an urbane, up-tempo, gritty, and heavily percussive sound. Glenn C. Altschuler argues that like early twentieth century black popular music, Rhythm and Blues was shaped by a particular set of demographic changes and patterns of internal migration. Between 1940 and 1960, the number of African Americans living in cities grew from 49 percent to 73 percent. In the 1940s alone, more than one-third of all southern Black people between twenty and twenty-four years moved to border states or northern cities.[107] As in the immediate past, African Americans were forced to access Rhythm and Blues by frequenting segregated nightclubs, showrooms, theatres, and movie houses in urban spaces.[108]

Despite ongoing segregation, a number of important post-WWII technological changes granted African Americans greater access to popular culture, broader pathways to mainstream

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[106] For the remainder of the twentieth century, the interchangeable genre terms "Rhythm and Blues" and "R&B" reflected significant developments and transformations in the black vocal music tradition of the post-WWII era. *Billboard*'s editorial staff replaced the "race music" label it had used during the first half of the twentieth century with "Rhythm and Blues" because of a widespread African American backlash towards the negative connotations of the "race" descriptor. *Billboard* continued to use the term "Rhythm and Blues" to describe its chart until the late 1960s when the "Hot Rhythm & Blues Singles" chart was renamed the "Best Selling Soul Singles" in 1969 (Soul was a sub-genre of Rhythm and Blues). Forty years after Rhythm and Blues' introduction to the mass market, the genre's title was abbreviated to "R&B" in order to reference 1980s vocals stylings that combined elements of Rhythm and Blues, Soul, Funk, Pop, Hip Hop, and Dance. For more information, see, Leo Sacks, "The Soul of Jerry Wexler," *New York Times,* August 29, 1993 (accessed January 11, 2007); Portia K. Maultsby, "Rhythm and Blues," in *African American Music: An Introduction,* eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 245-247; and Palmer, Robert, *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1981), 146.

[107] Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'N' Roll Changed America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11.

[108] Shaw, 74.

access, and generated new varieties of consumption. Maultsby maintains that these changes connected black musical expression with the ethos, pulse, sounds (factories and street life) and technologies (amplification and electric instruments) of living in the city.[109] These advances shifted spatial dynamics and the use/usefulness of the public domain in terms of access to culture. By the 1940s, many African Americans enjoyed entertainment through recordings, whether they were played on jukeboxes, in segregated localities or their homes. With the help of small independent record labels, many Black artists were granted a level of national visibility for the first time. These labels – some of which were distributed by larger labels – included Savoy (1942), King (1943), Imperial (1945), Specialty (1946), Chess (1947) and Atlantic (1948). These independent labels developed and sustained small, committed and definable consumer niches. They also compensated Black creators – though not always fairly – with economic returns in the form of records sales. Finally, these labels offered African American songwriters and musicians industry benefits that they had been previously denied.[110]

Like rappers, Rhythm and Blues artists expanded the black musical vocabulary, rendered visible previously unchartered Black geographies, and transgressed the social boundaries of (racialized) sex and class. Artists conveyed these themes vis-a-vis throbbing rhythms and raunchy and very often misogynistic lyrics. Rhythm and Blues allowed Black musicians to express narratives of turbulent and taboo emotions; privilege vernacular language and practices; and use amplified and electrified instruments like the electric guitar. The use of this instrument often led critics to label Rhythm and Blues noisy.[111] Glenn C. Altschuler argues that many male Rhythm

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[109] Portia K. Maultsby, "Rhythm and Blues," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, eds. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 247-248.
[110] Donald J. Mabry, "The Rise and Fall of Ace Records: A Case Study in the Independent Record Business," *The Business History Review* 64: 3 (Autumn 1990): 411-412, 417.
[111] Examples include sub-genres such as Jump Blues and Doo-Wop that popularized vernacular language, humor, and amorous lyrics that expressed feelings of longing, loss, lust and sexual expectancy.

and Blues artists utilized the electric guitar to enhance audience excitability and the sexual innuendo of their performance. Many of these were male performers who often placed the guitar behind their head when they did the splits or pressed it against their groins and provocatively pointed the instrument outwards to the audience as a phallic symbol. Performers also accompanied the genre's dance-like instrumentation with shouts, growls, and falsetto.[112]

Due to the introduction of Rhythm and Blues, exclusionary and segregationist industry practices continued, as did a pre-existing and racist battle over the highly contested boundaries between mainstream music and "race music." Beginning in the first half of the twentieth century, music industry executives used their cultural paternalism to advance racialized perceptions of black music. David Brackett argues that these gatekeepers narrowly defined American culture within the limits of European and Christian musical traditions to address the needs and tastes of a northern, urban, middle-upper class, and hugely white target audience.[113] Glenn C. Altschuler contends that before 1954, when the *Brown versus the Board of Education* case struck down racial segregation in public schools, industry elites reproduced Jim Crow practices inside the music industry to exclude Black performers from the mass market and try to prevent white audience attraction to lack musical styles. Many music industry executives continued to focus their energies and investments on the white middle-class market, ignore racial minority markets, and segregate black artists from mainstream profitability. Even in instances where Black artists had the "privilege" of visibility, music industry executives exploited Rhythm and Blues artists by controlling airplay licensing, collecting royalties, and distributing proceeds to the copyright owners.[114] Altschuler maintains that as the genre entered the white mainstream market, and white audiences grew

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[112] Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 11-13.
[113] David Brackett, "The Politics and Practice of 'Crossover' in American Popular Music, 1963 to 1965," *The Musical Quarterly* 78:4 (Winter 1994): 777.
[114] Mabry, 414- 415; Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 48-50, 71-72.

attracted to the genre and its artists, some music industry gatekeepers at major record labels, radio stations, in television and live performance venues participated in a campaign against Rhythm and Blues' supposed threat.[115]

Within the context of the Jim Crow *duppy state*, Rhythm and Blues was imagined as "mongrelizing America" and reproducing conceptions of black unbeing.[116] Altschuler argues that while Jazz and Blues reached a small white American audience, Rhythm and Blues and its sub-genre Rock 'N' Roll found a large audience among white teenagers. White teenagers resourcefully tuned into small independent radio stations, visited black nightclubs and even travelled outside of their neighbourhoods to purchase records if their local establishment did not stock Rhythm and Blues and Rock 'N' Roll. Altschuler maintains that both genres benefitted from a generational divide that allowed American teens to differentiate themselves and their tastes from their parents. These musical styles also helped Black and white American youth shape their social identities within discursive contexts where they could explore, interrogate and contest the meanings ascribed to race, gender and sexuality. However, like the paranoia that later developed around Rap music's white listenership, white teenage consumption of Rhythm and Blues produced public hysteria among white communities. Critics chastised Rhythm and Blues for promoting racial integration and introducing 'vulgar' Black aesthetics and performance values to the mainstream market. Rhythm and Blues music industry advocates were also criticized for granting Black musicians economic opportunities. In the American south, the genre became a lightning rod for segregationists who argued that the music appealed to and reflected a set of supposed depraved

[115] Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 48-50, 71-72.
[116]Here, mongrelize is intended to refer to the ways that black popular music was imagined as a threat due to its potential to integrate audiences across racial lines, as well as assimilate the cultural tastes of American audiences and desegregate places of consumption. For more on Ann Douglas' concept of "mongrel America" see, Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday Press, 1996).

and primitive values and behaviours. And within the context of a fermenting Civil Rights Movement, segregationists contended that Rhythm and Blues' popularization would lead to sexual immorality, race-mixing, and miscegenation. Anti-Rhythm and Blues critics advocated that the genre be purged from jukeboxes, radio, and record shops.[117] Brian Ward maintains that these criticisms reflected a continuum whereby black culture was framed as both fascinating but feral, alluring but alarming, and sensual but sordid.[118]

Within the context of the Cold War, the ongoing gatekeeping of black popular music reflected an ecology of anti-blackness as well as nation-state attempts to suppress dissent and deal with a collective fear over internal subversion. Beginning in the 1950s, the nation's newest mass medium of television helped spread a public ideology and discourse of America as affluent, suburban, content in its gender roles, and harmonious and stable in its race and social class relations. Altschuler maintains that some Americans became anxious over cultural forms that had the potential to "demoralize, confuse, and destroy" citizens.[119] This discourse framed African Americans as problematic "others" who produced questionable artefacts for the nation. Elites were equally preoccupied with "apathetic, absent, or permissive parents," working mothers, supposedly emasculated fathers and juvenile delinquents.[120] Within this landscape of paranoia where Rhythm and Blues contributed to the process of unsettling the nation, elites struggled over whether this art form and its practitioners were capable of ruining the morals of (white) America's youth. These anxieties were most apparent in the dozens of congressional hearings and legislative efforts

[117] Altschuler, *All Shook Up,* 7-8, 17-18, 34-39.
[118] Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 39.
[119] Altschuler, *All Shook Up,* 7.
[120] Altschuler, *All Shook Up,* 7.

intended to regulate youth culture and their behaviour, as well as resistance towards desegregating social and public spaces where youth enjoyed these new musical forms.[121]

By the mid-1950s, music industry management and publishers combatted white audience attraction to black music and Black musician access to the mainstream marketplace with the controversial and coercive practice of "covers." Major record labels and publishing agencies deliberately and strategically shaped 'culturally acceptable' sounds and performances through racial and class-based markers by supplying consumers with 'sanitized' re-recordings of Rhythm and Blues records re-created by white artists. Through this sanitization process, the stylistic qualities central to African American music-making were being harnessed while also partially erased to meet (white) mainstream standards and ensure white artist profitability. Black musicians were simultaneously tricked or pressured into signing exploitative contracts, signing away their distribution rights to white cover artist, or accepting royalty rates at the bottom retail rate available in the music industry.[122] At its worst, the cover phenomenon involved outright theft due to white music creators, producers and executives lifting entire arrangements without granting black authors their credit. In this anti-black landscape, African American musicians lacked the clout to curtail

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[121] Some examples of congressional hearings and legislative efforts include the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Subcommittee's hearing on violence in radio and television and its impact on children and youth (1952), the Judiciary Subcommittee's investigation regarding Juvenile Delinquency and the role of TV shows in youth crime (1954), and the United States Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency with particular attention paid to comic books (1954). For more information on these political efforts, see, Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 7-11.

[122] One such agreement was made between southern independent recording label Stax Records and northern label Atlantic. In this agreement, Stax created the product, paid for the sessions, and handed Atlantic the finished product. From that point forward, Atlantic took on the remaining expenses, including mastering, pressing, labels, jackets, distribution, and promotion at a low royalty rate paid on 90 rather than 100 percent of all records sold. In the Stax-Atlantic deal, several artists were considered to be "on loan" to Stax from Atlantic. The Atlantic distribution setup in many respects had been nothing more than a production deal that allowed Stax to build a name, logo, and profile, yet had not enabled the label to remain in control of their manufacturing or marketing. While Atlantic could not be considered a major label at this time, this agreement highlights the practice of absorbing lesser known and underprivileged labels in an attempt to distribute the profitable product. For Atlantic's relationship with Stax, see Rob Bowman, *Soulsville, U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997). Also see, Maultsby, "Rhythm and Blues," 247-248; Arnold Shaw, "Researching Rhythm & Blues," *Black Music Research Journal* Vol. 1 (1980): 71, 74; Redd, "Rock! It's Still Rhythm and Blues," 34; Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 51- 56.

theft or appeal to disk jockeys or radio station owners who preferred to play covers. By 1957, the cover phenomenon had largely ended, and major labels began producing original recordings that were written, produced, and performed by white individuals. Altschuler contends that strangely, covers primed mainstream audiences for black aesthetic styles. By decade's end, the cover phenomenon occurred frequently enough to confirm the suspicion that anti-black racism, plagiarism, and financial exploitation were central factors in American recording industry practices.[123]

Music industry executives also tried to lure white audiences away from Black Rhythm and Blues musicians by repackaging their art into Rock 'N' Roll primarily played by white artists. Beginning in the late 1940s, artists and gatekeepers created Rock 'N' Roll in part to control black music's visibility and maximize on fundamental technological changes. These transformations included the development of the electric guitar, which was a centerpiece of Rock 'N' Roll, as well as the amplifier, microphone, and 45 rpm vinyl record. Maultsby argues that while members of the industry branded Rock 'N' Roll an independent genre, it was Rhythm and Blues re-branded and re-packaged into a supposedly sanitized commodity for white audiences. In the segregated and racialized world of mid-twentieth century America, while Rock 'N' Roll was played by Black and white musicians, the public – and the prophylactic state more broadly – discursively limited Black musicians to Rhythm and Blues and whites to Rock 'N' Roll.[124] And yet, the genre was a direct derivative of Rhythm and Blues as well as a hybrid of Black and white musical forms, Chicago electric Blues instrumentation and country boogie influences.[125] Rock 'N' Roll's development dictated that it was multiracial in its intent and practice. The genre also increased Black and white

[123] Redd, "Rock! It's Still Rhythm and Blues," x, 38, 41- 42, 46.
[124] Maultsby, "Rhythm and Blues," 247-248.
[125] Additional aesthetic influences include Gospel and Pop vocal styles, and Swing and Jump Blues instrumentation (blaring horns, boogie woogie rhythm, guitar riffs and shouted lyrics).

artists' opportunities to garner mainstream access through the practice of crossing over into the popular music chart which was consumed by Black and white teenagers.[126] Hugh Gregory argues that the definable differences between Rhythm and Blues and Rock 'N' Roll were entirely perceptual and primarily governed by a record's or an artist's ability to "crossover" in both directions.[127]

Despite rampant anti-Black and segregationist practices in the music industry, Black Rock 'N' Roll artists, like rappers, crossed over into the mainstream market by deliberately framing the genre as Black/white youth music. Paul H. Fryer argues that as Black artists increasingly shaped mainstream sounds, they were able to crossover in both directions in greater frequency. Fryer maintains that Rock 'N' Roll's lyrics were largely responsible for the crossover phenomenon given that they focused on subject matter deemed suitable, relatable and within the wheelhouse of white middle class youth. These topics included youth frustration, cars, teenage heterosexual love, school, and music. The key thematic subjects of Rock 'N' Roll included the constraints of white middle class culture, tensions with authorities, teenage rebelliousness, and apprehensions regarding sex. [128] Artists also crafted coded lyrics that mobilized b(l)ack looking as part of their crossover material.

Black Rhythm and Blues and Rock 'N' Roll artists mobilized coded lyrics to speak back to Jim Crow segregation. Paul H. Fryer maintains that despite the perception that all Rock 'N' Roll was sanitized, conciliatory, and apolitical on issues of race, Black crossover artists often coded their dissension within lyrics about generational conflict and parental authority. They did so to

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[126] Maultsby, "Rhythm and Blues," 247-248.
[127] Hugh Gregory, *The Real Rhythm and Blues* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1998), 7.
[128] Paul H. Fryer, "'Brown-Eyed Handsome Man': Chuck Berry and the Blues Tradition," *Phylon* 42:1 (1st Qtr., 1981): 60, 69.

create art that the public still regarded as palatable.[129] Such was the case with musician Chuck Berry who firmly rooted his musical technique in the Blues tradition, but slyly subverted the obvious meanings of his lyrical content to offer social commentary on American power relations, acts of resistance and agency, and the economic and social repression of marginalized communities.[130] Black crossover Rhythm and Blues/Rock 'N' Roll artists used coded lyricism to discuss, analyze, critique, challenge and contest the norms, aspirations, and values enforced by mainstream cultural gatekeepers.[131] Altschuler argues that Black crossover artists did so by using a refined middle class aesthetic, and at times gender fluid performances in their resistive practices. Such was the case with Little Richard who admitted that he was articulating gender bending practices as he donned eyelashes, makeup and tight clothing to appear politically conciliatory and sexually non-threatening even as he expressed his b(l)ack looking relations and body politics.[132]

While Rhythm and Blues and Rock 'N' Roll artists produced these acts of resistance, Jazz musicians were called upon by the state to use their artistry to promote positive discourses about American democracy and citizenship. Abbott and Seroff argue that in the aftermath of World War II, the American government introduced several state funded programs and tours to encourage the influence of American culture and discourage the spread of communism.[133] Penny Von Eschen contends that these cultural campaigns embraced Jazz as an American art form and used Black artists as goodwill ambassadors and Cold War tools in order to build cordial relations with newly established African and Asian states that Americans feared might fall to communism.[134] Within the context of Jim Crow, Black musicians, civil rights activists, cultural entrepreneurs, cultural

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[129] Fryer, "'Brown-Eyed Handsome Man,'" 60, 69.
[130] Fryer, "'Brown-Eyed Handsome Man,'" 61, 67, 72.
[131] Fryer, "'Brown-Eyed Handsome Man,'" 60, 69.
[132] Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 56, 60-61.
[133] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right*, 7, 9, 12.
[134] Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 3-7,10, 12.

critics, and African American politicians used Jazz music to promote a vision of colourblind American democracy. This group agreed that Jazz's universality and race-transcending quality made it the perfect tool to mobilize these Cold War discourses.[135] As "cultural ambassadors," a number of Jazz musicians became public relations spokespeople during the Cold War. These artists were burdened with the task of articulating the values of democracy and democratic rule in an ideological war that framed democracy as logical and "civilized" and communism as threatening.[136] Even though these musicians believed in the idea of democracy, they were simultaneously experiencing an American democracy that justified Jim Crow coloniality, anti-black discourses and practices.

While the state promoted black Jazz musicians as symbols of American democracy, African American artists used this state sanctioned platform to articulate their counternarrative of United States politics. The state and mainstream writers equated Jazz with the Cold War's central trope: freedom. Von Eschen argues that state actors problematically assumed that Jazz was free-form and spontaneous instead of disciplined, complex in its rhythmic and melodic conversations, and laborious in its improvisatory exchange. These authorities used these discourse of freedom and spontaneity along with the blackness of these "cultural ambassadors" to legitimize claims that the American project was one of inclusion and liberation for all. Within the context of the Jim Crow *duppy state*, black artistry and black creation were mobilized as symbols of freedom within a racial discourse that masked America's race relations and the ongoing levels of unfreedom. Von Eschen argues that these Cold War state sponsored tours highlighted a profound paradox and the contradiction of American democracy. That is, even as African Americans were being used in a foreign policy project, Jim Crow America persisted, black quotidian life chances were constrained,

[135] Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 3-7,10, 12.
[136] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right*, 7, 9, 12.

and African Americans still did not enjoy the full freedoms of citizenship, equity, and inclusion.[137] Sullivan maintains that as goodwill ambassadors abroad, Jazz bandleaders such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Dizzy Gillespie recognized these paradoxes. They also used this opportunity to discuss the nature of American segregation as well as their personal experiences as racialized Americans. As the Jazz ambassadors incorporated their life stories alongside existing media reports and discourses about the prevalence and nature of American racism, the state's campaign to use Black artists as American cultural diplomats largely backfired.[138] Von Eschen adds that as American officials provided Black artists with opportunities to move across national borders, the Jazz ambassadors used these moments to pursue civil rights agendas internationally, establish Afro-diasporic solidarities, and share their creations and practices in international art arenas with other Black artists.[139]

Within this climate of hidden dissent, Black Jazz artists continued to resist state cooptation and commodification of their art by creating new and unadulterated forms such as Free Jazz. Like Bebop, Free Jazz was a form of cultural resistance that challenged the forms and styles that preceded it. By the 1960s, Black Jazz musicians developed Free Jazz to reclaim Jazz – which was now a commercial commodity – as a black creation. Free Jazz musicians were also preoccupied with the exploitation of African American Jazz artists. Philippe Carles maintains that Free Jazz musicians provided mainstream audiences with a dissenting reminder of Jazz music's historical,

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[137] Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 3-7,10, 12.
[138] Denise Sullivan, *Keep On Pushing: Black Power Music from Blues to Hip Hop* (Chicago, Il: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011), 13-15. Penny Von Eschen argues that bandleaders such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Dizzy Gillespie had been touring Western Europe for years because the market was far more lucrative and audiences had a greater level of appreciation for these musicians than audiences in the United States. By the 1950s, the State Department believed that the U.S. had already won the support of Western Europe, and as a result, they insisted on focussing on the nations currently emerging from colonialism. For more on Jazz musicians' performances on behalf of the State Department, see, Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 8.
[139] Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 3-7,10, 12.

social, cultural and economic conditions and historical trajectory. The pro-Black stance of Free Jazz artists was fundamental to promoting the centrality of blackness to Jazz music.[140] As these Free Jazz artists were transforming the genre, they rendered visible anti-Black practices within the music industry, and utilized art as a form of politics and radical resistance. Like Rhythm and Blues, Rock 'N' Roll and Gospel, Free Jazz importantly shaped the music-making practices and racial politics of the era as well as that of the "New" Jim Crow era that would follow.[141]

Black Music Amid the Ramping Up of the Carceral State and the "New" Jim Crow

As in earlier eras of the *duppy state*, African American artists in the 1960s continued to create music that responded to the afterlives of slavery and reflected the changing tide of Black liberation practice and rhetoric. During the long Civil Rights Movement, African Americans endured continued segregation, vigilante violence, and the onset of the Wars on Drugs and Poverty which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three. In this period, black musicians produced a significant transformation in the political tone of black popular music with the creation of Soul music.[142] The genre first became a household name in 1964 during the Harlem riot when Black businessmen began displaying signs in their windows that read "soul brother." These men did so to identify themselves as Black-owned businesses and prevent possible looting.[143] A year later Black disc jockeys across the United States cemented the national acceptance of the term by

[140] Ellen Southern argues that the centrality of blackness was reinforced in techniques such as atonality and a return to non-tonal music (as in the case of field hollers and jubilees) and using polytempic and polyrhythmic structures rather than being dependent on chord progressions. For more on these transformations, see, Ellen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans* (New York: Norton, 1997).
[141] Carles and Comolli, *Free Jazz/Black Power*, 12, 23-24.
[142] For more on this concept of the long Civil Rights Movement, see, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 91, No. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263.
[143] William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*: *the Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1992), 192-198.

identifying their Black-oriented stations as "soul radio." William L. Van Deburg argues that Soul became a signifier of "blackness" and positive Black identity politics. The genre also privileged the axis of "urban" and "working class." That is, given that Soul was associated with the music, dance, foodways, fashion, hairstyles, body gestures and language of urban black spaces, it became a euphemism for working class Black people living in urban spaces. By 1969, *Billboard* renamed its black music chart yet again as "Soul" to reflect this new popular music sensibility.[144]

Like rappers and earlier black artists, Soul musicians crafted lyrics that reflected their b(l)ack looking and the contemporary tone of black liberation. Within the rubric of the long Civil Rights movement, Soul artists served mainstream consumption as well as a broad range of Black political ideologies. Like Rhythm and Blues musicians, they did so by coding their dissent within musical aesthetics that appealed to mainstream conventions. Soul musicians recognized that within the context of continued racial antagonism and discourses of unbeing, they could not freely express their politics in explicit lyrics. Given Soul's firm rooting in the Black church tradition, many Soul musicians in the late 1960s coded their politics in metaphorically contained alternative and subversive lyrics, rather than explicit documentary-style narratives. For example, in Curtis Mayfield's 1965 recording "People Get Ready" with The Impressions, he used beatific gospel imagery, rich allegory, and metaphors to code his political messages. Like many of his contemporaries, Mayfield made few references to race, working class problems or the Black liberation movement in his music. His lyrics symbolically referenced acts of protest, persuasion and non-violent intervention.[145]

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[144] Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 192-198, 204-208.
[145] Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and the Black Public Culture* (New York City, NY: Routledge, 1999), 42-44, 51-53, 88-90.

By the late 1960s, Soul musicians were increasingly criticized if they chose to code their political messaging or distance themselves from the Black liberation movement. For example, black-owned and commercially successful record label Motown Records was challenged for its largely apolitical material and inability to address the populist concerns of a largely Black, urban-based working class. While Motown recorded some political speeches in the 1960s, the label tended to record material that was free of explicit racial politics due to its prioritization of integration and mainstream market appeal.[146] By the 1970s, many Motown artists addressed this gap by directly engaging with the urban Black and working-class politics of the period. This decision was, in part, a direct consequence of Berry Gordy's decision in 1972 to abandon his working class constituency in Detroit and re-locate to Los Angeles. It was also the result of decisions made by the label's executives to loosen their production rules.[147]

At the height of the long Civil Rights movement, Black musicians used Soul music to articulate the Black liberation politics of the era and maintain the very communities of resistance that had continually produced a Black discourse of protest. Mark Anthony Neal argues that throughout the 1960s, Black public life and popular music continued to be shaped and defined by random vigilante violence, the murders of key liberation leaders, a heightened presence of policing and surveillance, a general decline in the safety and stability of African American public institutions, and the subsequent demise of accessible social spaces. Soul musicians were also influenced by the shift in the tone of Black liberation practice from largely a non-violence Civil Rights practice to the pro-Black militancy of the Black Power era.[148] While some artists were

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[146] Motown producers typically recorded speeches on Motown's spoken world label Black Forum. Some of the speeches included: Stokely Carmichael's "Free Huey" speech (1968), and Martin Luther King's "The Great March to Freedom" (1963) and "Why I Oppose War in Vietnam" (1967) speeches.

[147] Neal, *What the Music Said*, 42-44, 51-53, 88-90; Michael Eric Dyson, *Mercy, Mercy Me: The Art, Loves and Demons of Marvin Gaye* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2004), 48.

[148] For a discussion about this period, see, Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights

lyrically careful or continued to disengage from Black liberation politics, many began to inject a broadly interpreted set of populist concerns of a largely Black, urban-based working class into their music. These Soul artists began to express themes such as racial pride, self-reliance, self-defense, Pan-Africanism, and internationalism by way of solidarity with locations in the Global South. Soul musicians also began to debate over the perceived failures of the direct action non-violent movement.[149]

Like rappers, Soul musicians used their genre for political purposes when they crafted lyrics that conveyed positive articulations of blackness to combat Black unbeing. Through the use of signifying practice, Soul musicians developed lyrics comprised of a veritable lexicon of distinctive and coded vernacular that appealed to the in-group cachet of Black America.[150] This formulaic signifying which was labelled "Soul Talk" often took the form of slogan phrases such as "I got soul," "Right on people," "Brothers and Sisters," and "I need some Soul Power." These slogan lyrics were often used to strengthen the sense of a Black racial bloc, generate an in-group identity, articulate Black pride and in-group consciousness, and affirm a system of alternative values and an essence of Black distinctiveness.[151] By reusing and recombining many of the stock phrases uttered throughout American urban centers, Soul musicians established a rapport with Black audiences and authenticated a shared linguistic and experiential understanding. As Soul musicians

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Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 91, No. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263; Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South*, 1940-1980 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[149] Neal, *What the Music Said*, 42-44, 51-62, 88-90.

[150] Signifying practice is considered an intrinsically subversive rhetorical device whereby the speaker uses words and phrases that are indirect, repetitive and meant to foster new meanings outside of the mainstream discourse. For additional information on signifying practice, see Dick Hebdige, "Style as Homology and Signifying Practice," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. by Andrew Goodwin and Simon Frith (London: Routledge 1990), 60-61.

[151] Brackett, "The Politics and Practice of 'Crossover' in American Popular Music, 1963 to 1965," 311.

used slogan lyricism for political purposes, they were able to declare their humanity and redefine the terms of debate on collectivity, worthiness, and success.[152]

Aside from pro-Black lyrics, Soul musicians also contested the music industry's anti-blackness by purposely highlighting African-based traditions over European models in their music and aesthetics. Soul music combined Gospel and Rhythm and Blues alongside an emphasis on intricate percussive patterns and organic emotiveness. Both of these qualities were said to be African-based in that they generally could not be found in the melodically centered European musical tradition.[153] The music also possessed a complex polyrhythmic interplay between the rhythm section, horns, vocals and body rhythms produced through finger-snapping, clapping, and the stomping of feet. Soul musicians used these percussive sounds to create a complex rhythmic structure. First, Soul musicians used syncopation to accent weaker rhythms. Second, they generated a multi-rhythmic approach by combining and layering a variety of sounds. These sounds included call-and-response, short and repetitive melodic motifs, text interpolation, strained and full-throated melismatic variation, inflections in the vocal register, and emotionality in their performance.[154]

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[152] Francesca D'Amico, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, But It Will Be Recorded: Soul, Funk, and the Black Urban Experience, 1968-1979," in *The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision: Media, Counterculture, Revolt*, eds. Timothy Scott Brown and Andrew Lison (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 189-190.

[153] These aesthetic practices included: percussive and syncopated rhythms, the use of call-and-response (a succession of two distinct phrases usually played or sung by different musicians, where the second phrase is heard as a direct commentary on or response to the first), vocal embellishments and melismatic melodies [the technique of changing the note (pitch) of a single syllable of text while it is being sung], varied and expressive vocal tone, shouting, vocal dexterity and falsettos (a technique employed by male vocalists to alter their singing capabilities so that their voice is at a very high pitch using more air and a combination of vocal chord vibration and head resonance), melodic improvisation, repetition, hand clapping, foot stomping, and piano and tambourine instrumentation. All of these techniques have been central to many African American musical forms before Soul. For more information on these techniques, see Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study," *African American Review* 29:2, Special Issues on The Music, (Summer 1995): 192; Jon Fitzgerald, "Motown Crossover Hits 1963-1966 and the Creative Process," *Popular Music* 14:1 (January 1995): 3-4.

[154] Short and repetitive melodic motifs are melodic formulas that represent the smallest analyzable element or phrase of a composition. Text interpolation entails when the melody or portions of a melody (often with modified lyrics) are taken from a previously recorded song and re-recorded. Strained and full-throated melismatic variation involves a vocalist generating sounds that are full, rich and powerful in sound that may even sound strained on the vocal chords. The melismatic component involves singing a single syllable of text while moving between several

Like Rap music, Soul performance and its political usefulness varied according to locality and region. These geographical specificities shaped regional techniques, the caliber of artist, target audiences, and the genre's intent. While northern Soul performers employed fewer Gospel-like techniques to generate a considerably less emotive delivery, southern Rhythm and Blues was heavily governed by Gospel. Evidence of this can be found in the vocal inflections and shouting style of southern vocalists, as well as solo singers' interpretation of the text according to their experiences. Soul musicians also stressed the emotiveness of the genre through short accentuated horn riffs, the use of the organ as standard instrumentation, and a rhythmic emphasis built around bass lines.[155] By the 1960s, the latent blurring of religious and secular forms in Soul, created competing musical renderings of Soul. This blending of black musical formats, which had occurred since enslavement, demonstrated the varied ways that African Americans across regions carved out different niches and expressions of empowerment for themselves using the common canvas of Soul music.

In Northern Soul Black musicians prioritized sounds and performances that privileged respectability politics to make greater inroads into the mainstream market and generate a broader political platform. For example, the 'Motown Sound,' which was produced by Motown Records, moved away from stereotypical notions of blackness in favour of bourgeoisie associated behaviours and middle class respectability. Northern Soul artists created a class-based image that did not reflect working class realities to challenge discourses of Black unbeing and subvert hegemonic interpretations of blackness.[156] This was particularly evident in the example of

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different notes in succession. Melismatic techniques are used to generate inflections in the vocal register. In terms of including emotionality and excitability in performances, vocalists did so by grunting, shouting, jumping up and down, and dropping to their knees among other actions. Robert W. Stephens, "Soul: A Historical Reconstruction of Continuity and Change in Black Popular Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 12:1 (Spring 1984): 26-27.

[155] Stephens, "Soul: A Historical Reconstruction of Continuity and Change in Black Popular Music," 28-31.

[156] David Sanjek, "One Size Does Not Fit All: The Precarious Position of the African American Entrepreneur in Post-World War II American Popular Music," *American Music* 15:4 (Winter 1997): 536, 545-546.

Motown's charm school which required mandatory daily instruction for all artists in matters of etiquette, deportment, cosmetics, and elocution. While this instruction differed according to gender, Motown's charm school instructed artists on proper posture, body movement, microphone technique, and interviewing deportment. Artists were also forbidden from closing their eyes while singing, finger snapping, spreading their legs, or sticking out their buttocks when performing. Arnold Shaw argues that Motown paired these class-based aesthetics with apolitical lyrics and performances that met the requirements of a (white) mainstream America.[157] In doing so, Motown actively disassociated itself from the Black working class and reproduced the goals of the prophylactic state.[158]

In the South, Soul musicians unapologetically privileged and lauded Black working and workless poor identities as viable and 'authentic' representations of blackness in an effort to contest discourses of Black unbeing. This competing Soul aesthetic was perhaps best exemplified by Stax Records where the label prided itself on meeting the needs of a largely Black and teenaged target audience who appreciated 'low-fi' sounds created on stereo.[159] Rob Bowman argues that the low-fi Stax sound perfectly captured what Southern Soul fans appreciated: a "raw," "unpolished" and harsh vocal delivery built on a fusion of the Delta Blues and Gospel. This aesthetic was interspersed with call-and-response patterns, falsettos, and sounds reminiscent of the field hollers and urban cries characteristic of music created under bondage.[160] The vocal delivery of soloists tended to be

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[157] These included: call-and-response between leading and backing vocals, recallable and quasi-improvisatory melodies, and syncopated motifs through the use of handclaps, finger snapping, and tambourine instrumentation. For more information on Motown techniques, see, Shaw, "Researching Rhythm & Blues," 106; Fitzgerald, "Motown Crossover Hits 1963-1966 and the Creative Process," 5.

[158] Gerald Posner, *Motown: Music, Money, Sex and Power* (New York: Random House, 2009), 114-115.

[159] "Low-fi" referred to an aesthetic in music production that does not rely on sophisticated equipment and post-production alteration of the recording. The recording is deliberately created in such a fashion that reflects an unpolished and rough product. For more, see Rob Bowman, "The Stax Sound: A Musicological Analysis," 317.

[160] Falsetto is a method of voice production used primarily by male singers, especially tenors, to sing notes beyond the vocal range of the normal or modal voice. This means that these male singers are producing a vocal range that is

replete with emotionality, and artists typically generated excitement by shouting, crying or screaming.[161] Unlike Soul from the north, Southern Soul labels built their brand on the star power of solo vocalists and sparing use of background vocals. In the place of background vocalists, session musicians used short, syncopated, and repeating horn riffs as a call and response passage.[162] Unlike Northern Soul, southern Black Soul artists centered performances of working class blackness that had long been associated with discourses of unbeing and degraded on the grounds of racist and classist perceptions of blackness. This phenomenon suggests that even as Soul musicians tackled Black liberation differently according to region, Southern Soul musicians confronted Black unbeing more directly than their northern counterparts.

Shortly following the innovation of Soul, Black artists created Funk as part of an ongoing political impulse among black popular music practitioners to expand and humanize public performances of blackness. The term 'Funk' was first used in the 1950s to describe Hard-Bop Jazz – a style characterized by a heavy drum beat, bass lines with dark tone colour and low frequencies, gospel harmonies, melodic phrasings, and Blues timbres.[163] In this period, the term "funky" became analogous with urban dance music that combined Rhythm and Blues and Soul techniques. Rickey Vincent argues that like Soul, Funk was shaped by concepts of "primitivism" and "authenticity" that were first agreed upon by a broad constituency of black community members and later extended into the (white) mainstream. This constituency agreed that Funk was an African American vernacular that described the feeling, attitude, philosophy, and behavior of being "down-

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unusually or unnaturally high for their vocal register. The sound that is produced through falsetto is typically a breathy and flute-like sound relatively free of overtones.

[161] Star vocalists at Stax included Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, Isaac Hayes, and Wilson Pickett. For more information on Stax, see, Stephens, "Soul: A Historical Reconstruction of Continuity and Change in Black Popular Music," 23-24, 28.

[162] Rob Bowman, "The Stax Sound: A Musicological Analysis," 306-310.

[163] Tone color is the characteristic that allows listeners to distinguish the sound of one instrument – each of whic produces a distinct tone color – from another.

to-earth," "authentic," and "in touch with the essence of being human."[164] While 1960s and 1970s Funk largely appealed to black professionals and the white Hippie counterculture, it was imagined as rooted in the sensibilities, cultural values and aesthetics of the black working class. As some Soul musicians transformed their art into Funk, the rhythmic structure of black music began to emphasize the downbeat and demonstrate its intimate relationship to west African music.[165] This was particularly evident in the work of James Brown. Rickey Vincent suggests that Brown kick-started a new pop trend that made a rhythmic connection to continental African music-making practices. Other musicians such as Sly Stone would add complex syncopations and a bass-plucking layer over this newly developed rhythmic variation.[166]

Along with a set of instrumental transformations that privileged Black humanness, Soul and Funk artists incorporated lyrics that reflected being, called for Black liberation, and unmasked "old" Jim Crow as the *duppy state*. In my earlier scholarship, I argue that these recordings – which I label *Politico-Soul/Funk* – reflected a complex set of Black liberation sentiments that Soul and Funk artists intentionally circulated in public discourse.[167] I argue that unlike early 1960s Soul and Funk content, these late 1960s and 1970s recordings were far more explicit, critical and pessimistic in their assessment of the era. The lyrics referenced growing urban unrest, interrogated (non)violence as a response to anti-black racism, encouraged the growth of critical consciousness among African Americans, and explicitly discussed the social, political and economic conditions of black life as the social justice politics of the period transitioned from Civil Rights to Black Power. By producing *Politico-Soul/Funk* records, Soul and Funk musicians, like late twentieth

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[164] Rickey Vincent, *Funk: The Music, the People and the Rhythm of the One* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 58-69.
[165] The downbeat is the first beat of a measure in a musical bar. When conducting a musical text, a conductor will typically make a downward stroke to indicate the principally accented note of a measure of music also known as the downbeat.
[166] Vincent, *Funk,* 58-69.
[167] D'Amico, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, But It Will Be Recorded," 186-187.

century rappers, generated space in public discourse to debate over the perceived failures of political leaders and activists who had labored to transform and shift the quality of urban black life, and the power structures and discourses that continued to disarm Blacks of their rights and humanity.[168] Through these activities, artists engaged with and contributed to the recalibration of the black discursive agenda and redefined the terms of the debate between Black communities, the American public, and the state.

By the late 1960s, Black musicians combined this b(l)ack looking alongside Soul and Funk's musical techniques, lyrical content, and aesthetics in order to position Black contributions as valuable.[169] Portia K. Maultsby argues that Soul and Funk musicians produced this political action by mobilizing Africanisms in the mainstream marketplace to assert a level of cultural and racial pride and render visible the range of Black geographies that had, genre after genre, been under pressure and surveillance.[170] Black musicians utilized Soul and Funk as a landscape to validate, value and prioritize African American idioms in the (white) American mainstream. This was particularly evident in the focus and prevalence of rhythm over melody. Black musicians featured the call-and-response technique, and the polyrhythmic practice of syncopation through the use of finger-snapping, clapping and feet stomping. They also added repetitive and expressive

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[168] D'Amico, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, But It Will Be Recorded," 186-187.

[169] The specificities of black aesthetics in Soul music tended to include artists wearing their hair naturally (as afros), and wearing materials/prints, head wraps and jewelry associated with West Africa, and using "Soul talk" – a vernacular language commonly associated with urban spaces.

[170] Africanisms are described as a flexible conceptual framework that has changed and adapted to diasporic conditions in order to inspire creativity (among African descended peoples) throughout the Americas. In relation to music-making, this framework includes an aesthetic of group participation; a performance style that uses body language and dress to convey a sense of 'cool'; an aesthetic of sound that encourages the expressive use of timbre; an improvisatory sense that privileges the reinterpretation of familiar material over being faithful to the original; and a preference for topical music and social commentary. This framework has helped scholars of African American music understand how Black musicians have built upon the foundation of inherited African values, styles, and sensibilities. For additional information on Africanisms, see Joseph E. Holloway, ed. *Africanisms in American Culture. 2nd Edition.* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005); Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, *African American Music: An Introduction.* (New York, NY: Routeledge, 2006), 51-54; James Stewart, "Message in the Music: Political Commentary in Black Popular Music from Rhythm and Blues to Early Hip Hop," *The Journal of African American History* (2005): 313.

melismatic vocal improvisation in the form of vocal runs, falsettos, moans, shouts, grunts and hollers.[171] With the introduction of Funk, Black artists solidified the primary role of rhythm by prioritizing the electric bass guitar. This instrument, which produced Funk's central "groove," became the genre's primary instrument. Paul Gilroy contends that this shift in American music-making towards a rhythmically centered practice drew mainstream attention to the "lived sense of a racial self."[172] Funkadelic drummer Jerome Brailey echoed Gilroy's theory when he told journalist Robert Palmer that, "the heavier the rhythm, the heavier the blackness, and the blacker, the better."[173]

By the mid-to-late 1970s, a nation-wide economic crisis led music industry executives to discourage Black artists from producing politically trenchant music in favour of stabilizing the profitability of black popular culture.[174] Mark Anthony Neal contends that in the late Soul/Funk era, a small faction of pre-existing white-owned companies annexed much of the production and distribution of black popular music. The access that these companies had to the apparatuses to promote and market music significantly outmatched the marketplace power of smaller independent labels. They also used corporate production and marketing strategies that required that music be formulaic and stagnant to become commercially successful. This decision resulted in artists experiencing limits on their narrative and aesthetic content.[175] This was certainly true of artists like Gil Scott-Heron who was told by Arista record executives that they could not market his politically

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[171] Mark Anthony Neal, "Trouble Man: The Art and Politics of Marvin Gaye," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 22:4 (Winter 1998): 252; Stephens, "Soul: A Historical Reconstruction of Continuity and Change in Black Popular Music," 26-27; Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study," *African American Review* 29:2 (Summer 1995): 192; Jon Fitzgerald, "Motown Crossover Hits 1963-1966 and the Creative Process," *Popular Music* 14:1 (January 1995): 3-4.
[172] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, UK: Verso, 1993), 109-10.
[173] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 109-10; Burnim and Maultsby, *African American Music,* 296-303.
[174] For more information on Marcus Greil's observations see, Marcus Greil, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll* (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1975).
[175] Neal, *What The Music Said*, 106-109.

trenchant Civil Rights/Black Power recordings to an increasingly apolitical consumer public who was far more interested in Disco – a new form of African American dance music.[176] These demands were compounded by dramatic changes at many Soul and Funk heavy labels such as the relocation of Tamla/Motown Records from Detroit to Los Angeles in 1972, and the bankruptcy of Stax Records in 1975.[177] By the end of the decade, journalists like *New York Times'* John Rockwell alerted the public to a decrease in record sales and concert attendance that indicated that the popular music terrain was experiencing an economic downturn. While this phenomena occurred within the broader context of post-1968 politics and a nationwide economic stagflation, Rockwell attributed this financial crisis to consumer frustration with inflated prices.[178] Rockwell estimated that white FM audiences felt cut off from the musical idioms and psychological concerns of Black artists. Statistics indicated that white listeners perceived a distinct, self-contained black music market where Black artists spoke candidly and unapologetically to Black audiences. This perception appeared to have led to an overall decline in white concert attendance and listenership to 'consciousness raising' black music genres.[179]

In response to this decline in white listenership, Black Soul and Funk musicians adjusted their lyrics and instrumentation choices to meet the Disco market and its audience's needs. Black musicians understood that the market's embrace of Disco was a commercial imperative to generate capital and maximize profit. This market shift was an example of a 'soft' gatekeeping strategy in that it curbed and/or shifted the careers of many Soul and Funk artists and led to the silencing of 'consciousness raising' recordings. That said, Black Soul and Funk musicians found ways to

[176] Neal, *What The Music Said*, 106-09.
[177] Tadhg O'Keeffe, "Street Ballets in Magic Cities: Cultural Imaginings of the Modern American Metropolis," *Popular Music History*, 4:2 (2010): 123.
[178] John Rockwell, "Looking Past the Pop-Music Blues," *New York Times*, August 26, 1979, 76.
[179] John Rockwell, "Soul Music Still Lives in a World of Its Own," *New York Times*, April 24, 1977, D27.

remain relatively competitive in the marketplace. In my earlier scholarship, I argue that they ensured their competitive edge by replacing their lyrics and instrumentation with danceable recordings that centered content on leisure, love and sexuality.[180] Gillian Frank argues that as Disco saturated the market between 1977 and 1979, it became increasingly safe for mainstream consumption by white, straight, male, young and middle class Americans. In this atmosphere, Black Soul and Funk artists recognized that if they were to benefit from the existing profit model, they had little choice but to shift their content and instrumentation towards the format privileged by cultural gatekeepers, industry practices, and mainstream music audiences.[181]

Amid Disco's surge in popularity, Black musicians continued to produce politically trenchant art, this time with a focus on the burgeoning sexual revolution and humanizing expressions of Black love. Disco, like many other black popular music forms before it, was a location where Black musicians could comfortably express love, heartbreak and joy. Katherine McKittrick and Alexander G. Weheliye argue that when Black musicians expressed their thoughts and emotions, they revealed black life and black livingness as ever-changing sites, routes to and roots of joy, heartbreak and humanness. This process resisted refusals of black life and transformed notions of Black unbeing into Black as human.[182] Gillian Frank and Alice Echols maintain that given that Disco was associated with cultural difference from its origins, its lyrics and performances expanded the possibilities and expressions of love in the mainstream and public. The genre was primarily practiced by marginalized urban gay male and African American communities

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[180] For more on the nature of Politico-Soul/Funk, see Francesca D'Amico, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, But It Will Be Recorded: Soul, Funk, and the Black Urban Experience, 1968-1979," in *The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision: Media, Counterculture, Revolt*, eds. Timothy Scott Brown and Andrew Lison (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[181] Gillian Frank, "Discophobia: Antigay Prejudice and the 1979 Backlash Against Disco," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16:2 (May 2007): 288.
[182] Katherine McKittrick and Alexander G. Weheliye, "808s & Heartbreak," *Propter Nos* 2:1 (Fall 2017), 35-37.

with the frequent participation of Latinx communities and other white ethnic groups such as Italian Americans. By the late 1970s, Disco was largely framed in mainstream discourse by a predominantly sexualized framework that positioned the music as transgressive, sexually liminal, and in some cases threatening to the sustainability of masculinist popular music.[183]

Like Rap music, Disco's audience was also hugely interracial, and this drove many naysayers to claim that the genre was threatening. Fans claimed that they were attracted to Disco's pulsating, sensual and strict tempo of 125 beats per minute.[184] Rockwell argues that by 1977, statistics indicated that whites who purchased "Black music" tended to be of the "AM-radio, dance-entertainment phenomenon" – namely Disco music.[185] This audience shift paralleled the release of the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever* and its accompanying soundtrack, the rise of the all-Disco New York City radio station WKTU-FM, and the proliferation of Disco spaces such as discothèques. Music industry taste-makers altered their promotion formats to profit from this burgeoning market shift. The nature of Disco's audience broadened as a result.[186] By 1979, over two hundred all-Disco radio stations were in operation, and 25,000 discothèques existed across the country that generated six billion dollars in yearly revenue. Gillian Frank argues that by the end of the 1970s, the music industry was grossing over four billion dollars a year in Disco-specific financial returns.[187]

By the 1970s, the popularization and profitability of black music forms such as Disco meant that Black musicians had a tremendous effect on the direction of Top 40 music programming, the agendas of major manufacturers and music production advancements. Russell Sanjek maintains

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[183] Frank, "Discophobia," 284, 288, 290, 296; Echols, *Hot Stuff,* 10.
[184] Frank, "Discophobia," 284, 288, 290, 296; Echols, *Hot Stuff,* 10.
[185] Rockwell, "Soul Music Still Lives in a World of Its Own," D27.
[186] Frank, "Discophobia," 87-288.
[187] Frank, "Discophobia," 302.

that Disco transformed the mainstream marketplace and the corporate and public desire for African American music formats because it was relatively inexpensive to manufacture. Most performers tended to work on contract rather than on a guarantee or advance payment arrangement. Most producers were responsible for writing the lead sheet, lyrics, and musical arrangement which meant that they owned the copyright of the record. Disco also limited the need for live musicians given that the genre was largely created by using computerized rhythm machines that set the initial bass drum and bass guitar tracks. These foundational instruments were arranged at 125 beats a minute to ensure a danceable track. Producers then laid synthesizers, conventional and electrical instruments and vocals overtop machine drums and bass before mixing and mastering the final record. The swift popularization of Disco without the use of explicit marketing, advertising, or airplay was due to its dissemination in Disco clubs by deejays. Sanjek argues that deejays had a keen ability for programming, and this meant that they could use new forms of technology to entertain club attendees during long stretches of dance time. Deejays created the ultimate party experience by relying on quick cuing, mixers which were connected to a unit played from a tape deck, and twin turntables connected to theater-sized speakers with separate amplifiers for bass and treble. Discothèques also attracted attendees with their spectacular computerized sound-and-light shows.[188] These technological and marketing changes and devices would prove essential to the production and popularization of Rap music in five short years.

Conclusion: The Birth of Hip Hop in the Age of Mass Incarceration

By the late 1970s, on the eve of Rap music's birth, the inclination among Black musicians to use the platform of popular culture to engage in conversations about race, identity, and power grew

[188] Russell Sanjek, *American Popular Music and its Business: The First Four Hundred Years, Volume III 1990-1984* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 558 -559.

much stronger. For example, in 1976 when Americans celebrated the United States Bicentennial in a series of observances, Gil Scott-Heron – now considered one of the godfathers of Rap music – used black popular music to critique and contest the very tenets that the American Revolution had been fought to safeguard. In his recording "Bicentennial Blues," Scott-Heron argued that 1976 was, "a blues year / and America has got the blues because of partial deification / of partial accomplishments / over partial periods of time / Halfway justice / Halfway liberty / Halfway equality."[189] Through the use of signifying practice, Scott-Heron claimed that in this hour of crisis, the "blues people" (read black communities) were "in the street looking for the three principles / justice, liberty and equality."[190] These lyrics reflected the persistent need among many Black musicians to articulate the fact that the playing field had not leveled – not even in the aftermath and supposed progress of the Civil Rights/Black Power movements. Change was imagined as fleeting, and black communities were witnessing the persistent moral bankruptcy of American democracy. With the birth of Hip Hop culture, African Americans created yet another genre that could be mobilized for politically useful purposes to address the challenges of the newest version of the *duppy state* – mass incarceration.

The chapter that follows lays the foundation for understanding how Hip Hop culture broadly, and Rap music particularly, used innovation, language, and discourse to address the challenges of post-Civil Rights America. As African Americans became increasingly disillusioned with the mainstream political system and the *duppy state*, Rap music reflected a noted shift in intention and production. Richard Iton maintains that while Blacks possessed greater incorporation in urban politics, the birth of Rap music helped demystify the perception that curtailed Black

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[189] Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson, "Bicentennial Blues," 1976, *It's Your World* (Arista Records, AL 5001, 1976).
[190] Scott-Heron, "Bicentennial Blues," 1976.

representation in formal politics signified Black depoliticization. Instead, Rap music in the era of mass incarceration took on central importance as black politics became all the more urgent and vital. Iton maintains that Rap music became politically useful as both a space of rupture and (re)convergence of African American aesthetics and politics. Through Rap music, rappers, like Black musicians who preceded them, were incentivized to look, understand, absorb, and analyze the nature and texture of Black life in the newest reupholstering of the American *duppy state*.[191]

[191] For more information on Richard Iton's key argument regarding Hip Hop culture and the post-Civil Rights era, see, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics & Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

- CHAPTER TWO -
"It's A Big Daddy Thing:" Black Popular Music Transgressions Amid the Remasculinization of America, 1979-1990

"I bring the terror, horror, there's no tomorrow / Child you shouldn't even bother /To press up, and get broken like a Lee nail / So let me school 'ya plus scoop your female / Just like a gigolo, but I'm much bigger though / I'm like a hitman, pullin' the trigger slow / And smooth to the groove with lyrics that soothe / And improve with every move, That's why you've / Been enhanced by the mentally divine / […] In [19]89 there's damage being done / And for you to diss me will be very risky / 'Cause I make this be, as strong as whiskey / To break and make my foes dispose and fall / So y'all can see how me the Kane will just reign / Superior, Cause I ain't even hearin' ya / Save the yang, cause it's a Big Daddy thang."[1]
- Big Daddy Kane

On July 12, 1979, WLUP-FM disc jockey Steve Dahl set a bin containing 10,000 Disco vinyl on fire in the middle of Chicago's Comiskey Park as a stadium of baseball fans chanted "Disco Sucks!" After a 4-1 Detroit Tigers win over the Chicago White Sox, Dahl looked on as record shards flew from the crate and smoke rose from the pile.[2] Dahl immediately made a victory lap atop of his Jeep and exited the field. As White Sox pitcher Ken Kravec began warming up on the pitcher's mound for the second of the doubleheader game, fans charged onto the field. They tore down the batting cage, destroyed the pitching rubber, set signs on fire in center field, damaged the grass, slid down foul poles, dug up home base, and engaged in oral sex on third base.[3]

After nearly 20 minutes, broadcaster Harry Caray and White Sox franchise owner Bill Veeck begged rioters to return to their seats. Caray yelled over the PA system: "Holy cow! Let's say we all regain our seats so we can play baseball again." The duo even broke out into baseball's unofficial anthem "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" to quell the frenzied crowd. Their efforts were futile. Fans did not surrender the field for the second game. Twenty minutes later, police rode in on horseback, walked along the field with batons, and successfully cleared the field. Shortly after

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[1] Big Daddy Kane, "It's A Big Daddy Thing," *It's A Big Daddy Thing* (Cold Chillin'/Reprise/Warner Bros. Records, 7599-25941-1, 1989).
[2] Peter Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco* (New York: Faber and Faber, Inc., 2005), 233-234.
[3] Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around,* 233-234; commercialnewsandfun, "Disco Demolition Night at Comiskey Park in Chicago 1979," ESPN coverage of Disco Demolition Night, video clip, *YouTube*, uploaded on September 5, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1CP1751wJA (accessed June 25, 2016).

that, Veeck announced: "the umpire and the chief, and the president of the league have declared that the playing conditions of the field will not permit them to play the second ball game." The White Sox were forced to forfeit the second game.[4]

Dahl's "Disco army" had demolished Disco records as they set out to, and in the process Comiskey Park. Dahl engineered a promotion where fans could pay 98 cents and bring one or more Disco LPs for entry to the game. Following the riot, rioters left the field rife with broken glass, puddles of beer, divets, debris and the smell of marijuana and bonfire smoke. Police made thirty-nine arrests. Bill Veeck later told the press that, "it was a disastrous evening." White Sox broadcaster Jimmy Piersall told an ESPN interviewer that, "to see this happen was a disgrace. It was the worst promotion in the history of the world."[5]

In the immediate aftermath of Disco Demolition Night, Dahl hinted at the reasons for the anti-Disco backlash. Dahl explained to *ESPN* reporter Greg Gumble:

> Well, the first thing that I have against it [Disco] is that I can't find a white [three] piece suit that fits me off the rack. I hate the taste of pina coladas. I'm allergic to gold jewelry. […] I'm a cheapskate, I don't like to waste a lot of money at home, you know, in terms of my electrical bill, and you have to spend so much time blow-drying your hair. It's a waste of energy. Okay, I'm ecologically meaningful and cheap – so I'm not into it.[6]

Dahl referenced the fashion aesthetic made popular by *Saturday Night Fever* which prized highly coiffed hair, finely tailored suits, and expensive jewelry. By defining this aesthetic as excessive and wasteful, Dahl also questioned the expression of masculinity associated with it. In an interview with Tom Snyder of the *Tomorrow Show*, Dahl disclosed: "[The culture is] quite intimidating to our audience, to myself, to most rock-n-rollers because you have to look perfect, your hair has to

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[4] "Disco Demolition Night at Comiskey Park in Chicago 1979"; Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around,* 233-234; stellamasters, "1979 Disco Demolition Night, Local News Coverage," video clip, *YouTube*, uploaded on February 3, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpQfCcsqQ0E#t=2.379778299 (accessed June 25, 2016).
[5] "Disco Demolition Night at Comiskey Park in Chicago 1979."
[6] "1979 Disco Demolition Night, Local News Coverage."

be beautiful."[7] Coded in this response was a critique that equated Disco with the supposed intimidation by its constituents: African American, Latinx, Italian American and queer communities. But, how could perfectly coiffed hair be threatening?

By the late 1970s, independent research findings collected outside of the music industry demonstrated that the public distaste of Disco was intimately tied to anxieties over shifting expressions of gender and sexuality and the threat they supposedly posed to America's moral fabric. Media consultant John Parikhal found that Disco was imagined as "superficial, boring, and short on 'balls,'" as well as mindless, repetitive, formulaic, banal, unnatural, and synthetic. Parikhal consulted focus groups between the ages of fifteen to twenty-five years old. This cohort indicated that Disco was intimidating because of its emphasis on physical and sartorial perfection, and its sex-charged atmosphere. Peter Shapiro argues that Rock fans characterized Disco as "music for gay people" and effeminate men because they perceived the genre as lacking in the qualities of hegemonic masculinity.[8]

In an interview thirty years later, Dahl admitted that his distaste of Disco was also shaped by fears over his potential loss of earning potential. In an interview with *CSN*'s Chuck Garfien, Dalh said: "Disco sucked because I worked at […] a rock station—WDAI—when I first came to Chicago in [March] 1978, and they changed their format to Disco, and I lost my job."[9] According to Harry Wayne Casey, the lead singer of the Disco band KC and the Sunshine Band, rockers were "threatened that their music was going to disappear and this new type of music was going to take over."[10]

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[7] stellamasters, "1979 Disco Demolition Night, Local News Coverage."
[8] Echols, *Hot Stuff,* 10; Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around,* 235.
[9] SoxDrawer, "Disco Demolition Night: 30 Years Later," CSN's Chuck Garfien coverage, video clip, *YouTube*, uploaded on July 16, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97lgR41qZC8#t=71.521017224 (accessed June 25, 2016).
[10] Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around,* 232.

When Dahl organized "Disco Demolition Night" he capitalized on a distaste of Disco's market dominance, its gender and sexuality performances, and heightened anxieties over the racialized communities that consumed the genre. Beginning as early as December 1978, San Jose, California DJ Dennis Erectus rotated Disco recordings while grinding the needle into the vinyl and playing the sound of flushing toilets and people vomiting. By 1979, Erectus inspired other radio deejays to engage in similar rejection tactics. In Los Angeles, KROQ's DJ Darrell "Insane" Wayne buried disco albums in the sand as part of a Ventura Beach "disco funeral." In Portland Oregon, KGON's DJ Bob Anchetta used a chainsaw to destroy stacks of disco records. In Seattle, KISW had a nightly show called "disco destruction." Finally, on the weekend of April 13-15 1979, New York's WXLO DJs Sue O'Neil and Glen Morgan staged a "No Disco Weekend." Public antagonism towards Disco was evident in magazine ads like *Rolling Stone*'s "death to disco," and the "Shoot the Bee Gees" t-shirts which began appearing in 1978. Political campaigns also tapped into the existent anti-Disco backlash to stage a run for office. For example, in Oklahoma J.B Bennett unsuccessfully ran for a state senate seat by claiming that Disco was a "corrupting influence on our young citizens."[11] Anti-disco sentiment also existed in organized form as in the case of Detroit's D.R.E.A.D (Detroit Rockers Engaged in the Abolition of Disco) which made it their mission to "eliminate disco from the face of the earth."[12]

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[11] Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around*, 234-235.

[12] D.R.E.A.D was created by Detroit's WRIF FM's "Morning Crew" (Jimmy "J.J." Johnson, Lynne Woodison and George "Dick the Bruiser" Baier) and co-executive board member George Swell. Each member of the organization was issued an identification card. This card outlined a code of conduct that stipulated: 1) I will never wear platform shoes; 2) I will never wear zodiac jewelry; 3) I will never listen to Disco records and/or Disco radio stations; and 4) Silk dresses and three-piece suits are extremely suspect. Members were reminded that if they violated any of these stipulations, they would be punished by "the chair." In return, members received discounts on Rock records at local music chain Harmony House as well as two half-price entry tickets to the Cranbrook planetarium that staged "Laser Pink Floyd" every weekend. For more information on D.R.E.A.D see following sources: D.R.E.A.D Membership Card, submitted to the Facebook group "DREAD-Detroit Rockers Engaged in Abolition of Disco" by Steve Richter, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1095169532152&set=o.67763566880&type=3&theater, (accessed June 26, 2016).

These anti-Disco sentiments reflected a cultural crisis of masculinity and a desire among American Rock audiences to reinstate the masculine at the expense of what was deemed feminine. Susan Jeffords argues that between 1979 and 1987, the nation underwent a profound crisis around gender roles and an unstable sense of American-ness. This trauma provoked a nationwide desire to strengthen the national iconography by re-imagining American cultural representations from an ambivalent gender construction to a confident masculinity that defined itself in opposition to an enemy feminine. Jeffords calls this period "the remasculinization of America." She maintains that during this period, American images, concepts, constructions and definitions of masculinity and the patriarchal gender system underwent a revival and restabilization. This project required that the feminine and effeminate, as in the case of Disco, was dominated and excluded.[13]

Between the late 1970s and late 1980s, black popular music forms underwent a significant shift due to anxieties over ambivalent, fluid and unstable gender and sex performances of blackness. Jeffords argues that in the aftermath of the Civil Rights, Black Power, Women's Movement and Gay Liberation, gatekeepers and fans wrestled over gender to deal with tensions around race, sexuality and what white men saw as America's volatile and unbalanced social order.[14] Kai Fikentscher argues that Disco was an African American form that was largely by and for African Americans, Latinx communities, Italian Americans and queer people. Disco was a location of leisure where those who identified as being on the margins of the American mainstream could

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[13] Jeffords argues that under Jimmy Carter's presidency (1977-1981), conservatives believed that the political elite was stricken by malaise and a loss of national will to triumph domestically and internationally. As such, the nation was imagined as soft, weakened, defeatist, wavering, and lacking in virility. Jeffords maintains that conservatives framed Reagan's presidency as a revival of manliness vis-a-vis an aggressive approach towards the Cold War and the militarization of the state. Reagan was depicted as decisive, steely, resolute, confident, tough, aggressive, strong, and domineering. For more on the remasculinization of America, see Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), xii, 51, 167-168, 171, 175; Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 8-9, 11.

[14] Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America,* 40, 176,180, 183, 186.

imagine, live and enjoy an alternative, exciting and passionate sense of being.[15] Anti-Disco Rock fans lamented Disco's sense of being and read it as a "questionable" gender and sex system. These Disco critics demanded the reinstallation of a hyper-masculine scheme. Across the 1980s, other forms of black popular music also came under review as presentations of racialized gender and sex underwent a similar process of re-ordering and robust public debate. While these performances ebbed and flowed across the 1980s, there appeared to be a wider field of play early on in the decade as was evidenced in R&B artistry. As Rap's mainstream visibility increased in the second half of the decade, the gender binary seemed to harden. Black musicians offered an array of performances that were deliberate, explicit and coded in their attempts to negotiate the terms of heteronormativity, racialized constructs of gender and sex, gender fluidity, hybridization, and transracialism.

Between the late 1970s and 1990, the foregrounding of hyper-masculinity in black popular music resulted in the re-configuration of hardened gender expressions and expectations. Within the broader context of national remasculinization, the re-affirmation of hegemonic codes, practices, and images in black popular culture produced multi-levels of management of gender fluidity. This process also led gatekeepers and fans across racial divides to discipline, constrain, pacify, mute, commodify and co-opt black performances that did not meet the ridged gender binary. This chapter argues that 1980s Rap and R&B artists used the unstable, and therefore rich landscape of culture to negotiate the parameters of racialized gender and sexuality scripts in the (white) mainstream. They did so even as public discourse dictated that non-normativity and 'difference' in the form of

[15] Kai Fikentscher, "Disco and House," *African American Music: An Introduction.* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 320.

fluid racialized gender performances should be reluctantly included in the mainstream marketplace.[16]

As gender and sex performances hardened in popular culture, blackness and maleness was increasingly imagined in public discourse as intimately associated with "the urban." This socially and discursively constructed geographical space was closely tied to racialized and gendered perceptions of authenticity which rendered heteronormative Black masculinity legible as the "appropriate" representation of blackness. In the context of the 'blackened' inner city, the body – namely the Black male body – was at the centre of struggles over various formations of power and knowledge regarding who and what constituted blackness.[17] In the context of black popular culture, Black musicians used this black urban (male) space to articulate, wrestle over and establish notions of blackness in the late twentieth century, while also building upon, stretching, cracking open and problematizing narratives of Black unbeing. As this trend of privileging narrow expressions of masculinity prevailed, the Black male voice was discursively positioned as the authentic voice of Rap and *the* representative of the black public agenda. This designation resulted in some exclusion, marginalization, intimidation, domination, exploitation, and negation of feminized Black voices and voices on the edges in ways that were intimately linked to more extensive projects of power.

At the root of these late 1970s and 1980s backlash moments was public anxiety over the supposed unstable gender and sexuality signifiers in popular culture performances. These expressions were imagined as intimidating because: 1) they created mainstream space for blackness, femininity, male homosexuality and various types of 'others'; 2) they challenged historically rooted representations of heteronormativity and respectability politics; and 3) they

[16] Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America*, 40, 176,180, 183, 186.
[17] See Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader,* eds. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London: Sage Publications, London, 2001), 76-78.

drew attention to performances that were not necessarily dependent upon patriarchal definitions of pleasure. For the purpose of this chapter, instances of patriarchal pleasure include repressing and modifying 'non-normative' expressions of sexuality, rejecting expressions of sexuality that are not uniformly for and/or in service of heteronormative desire, and having physical, ideological and political power over 'effeminate' bodies to exploit them for the physical and commercial gain of heteronormative men.[18] By analyzing how gender performance and sexuality scripts transformed across the decade, this chapter explores how black popular culture texts contributed towards the (re)production and circulation of conceptions of racialized gender and sex that assumed the authority of 'truth' over who could speak and represent American blackness.[19] This chapter finds that the privileging of racialized, class-based, gendered and sexually-specific scripts profoundly shaped Rap's artistic codes and performances, as well as its public reception, and the efforts of the music industry to limit Rap to a discourse of masculinity.

The Emergence and Mainstreaming of Rap Music

Rap music emerged in the late twentieth century amid urban deindustrialization and several demographic, structural, and economic transformations.[20] Tricia Rose argues that Rap was an

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[18] Echols, *Hot Stuff,* xxv, 211.
[19] See Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 76-77.
[20] Eric Foner argues that deindustrialization began in the 1970s following a long period of post-WWII economic expansion and consumer prosperity – both of which came to an end and were followed by slow economic growth and high inflation. In this decade the United States was faced with declining profits and rising overseas economic competition. In response, the nation began eliminating well-paid manufacturing jobs by introducing automation and shifting production to low-wage labour or transferring employment opportunities overseas. By 1980, deindustrialization in cities such as Detroit and Chicago included the loss of more than half the manufacturing jobs in existence three decades earlier. Inside cities previously known to be manufacturing centers, the political and economic elite welcomed the opportunity to remake these spaces into hubs of finance, information, and entertainment. Foner contends that this was particularly apparent in New York City where the completed construction of the World Trade Center in 1977 symbolized this attempt to shift the economy away from manufacturing towards service (and the displacement and loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs). As a result of deindustrialization, Americans' real wages – that is, wages that were adjusted to take inflation into account – peaked in the early 1970s and then began a sharp and prolonged decline. For more on deindustrialization, see, Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History Brief*, 5th edition (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2017), 819-822;

expressive youth culture produced by African American, Afro-Caribbean and Latinx American-born and migrant youth living in the Bronx, New York City in the 1970s.[21] Youth used this form of rhymed storytelling to articulate what shaped and framed their day-to-day existence. Andrew Wiese contends that while New York City had been undergoing redevelopment since the 1930s, by the late 1960s the city's urban renewal initiatives resulted in the construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, the white flight of approximately 60,000 working class Bronx residents, and an extreme polarization of wealth.[22] This loss in clientele and capital hurt the borough's sustainability, businesses found it exceedingly difficult to survive, municipalities did not have enough tax resources to funnel into schools, and residents found themselves dealing with rapid economic deterioration and under-employment.[23] By the 1970s, changes in industrial technology and a loss of industry meant that many urban centres shifted from an industrial to service job market. Due to this shift in employment, racialized urban workers – many of whom lacked the proper training for service sector labour – dramatic decline in employment opportunities particularly in the industrial fields. In New York City alone, of the 105,000 annual job openings in the 1970s, only 9,000 were occupations for unskilled or uneducated citizens such as messengers, janitors, busboys or maids.[24]

Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcotte, *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2003); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[21] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 2. Rap was one of the four cultural elements of a broader Hip Hop culture that also included the artistic practices of deejaying, breaking (also known as breakdancing) and graffiti writing. Youth who participated in these cultural forms are also referred to as Hip Hop youth or the Hip Hop generation.

[22] Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 255.

[23] Kristine Wright, "Rise Up Hip Hop Nation: From Deconstructing Racial Politics to Building Positive Solutions," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal, 520 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012); Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005), *7-19,41-55*.

[24] William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997), 14, 35; William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (Chicago: IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 22-46; William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 424-429.

Along with the symptoms of urban deindustrialization, Rap was birthed within the context of social services disparities and citizen disinvestment in the political system. William H. Chafe contends that in the case of health, Black children in New York City were twice as likely as white children to die due to health and nutrition related issues before reaching age one, and more than four times as likely to be murdered between the ages of one and four. Education wise, approximately 40,000 New York youth dropped out of high school yearly. Black teenagers were twice as likely as white youth to drop out of school or to be suspended in rates that reached more than 50% of the school population.[25] Chafe suggests that these dramatic shifts in New York employment, health, and education resulted in a widespread sense of alienation and distrust in the democratic process. Between 1968 and 1976, voter participation across the United States declined more than 20% and nearly half of those voters were located in the nation's three largest urban centres. In New York – one of these three congressional districts – electorate participation plummeted from 63% in 1962 to 42% in 1976. In the South Bronx alone, voter participation in the 1976 presidential election was 21.8%. The South Bronx was the second lowest voting turnout population across the nation surpassed only by Bedford-Stuyvesant at 18.8%.[26]

As Hip Hop youth dealt with the outcomes of deindustrialization, Black male youth in particular attempted to craft an expression of masculinity that might restore their patriarchal "right."[27] According to popular perceptions of hegemonic masculinity, "real men" have access to wealth and resources. Black male youth and men however continued to experience political disfranchisement, economic exploitation, social discrimination and dislocation. This meant that within a discourse of hegemonic masculinity, "poor," urban" and "Black" were often bound

[25] Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey,* 424-6
[26] Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey,* 413-414, 436-440.
[27] Jordanna Matlon, "Creating Public Fictions: The Black Man as Producer & Consumer," *The Black Scholar* 40 (3): 38; Cheney, "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation,'" 282.

together rendering urban Black men triply marginalized. R.W. Connell contends that masculinities do not yield social authority to the persons affected. Instead, even when marginalized masculinities attempt to take up hegemonic masculinity, they are complicit in reifying the unequal power relations without necessarily experiencing the benefits of being the "frontline troops of patriarchy."[28] Nonetheless, Black male youth recognized that by clinging to the textures of hegemonic masculinity, they could attempt to participate in powerful and redemptive narratives of belonging.[29] And yet, within the context of white supremacy, identifying with dominant masculinity did not secure their patriarchal authority given that it remained 'tainted' by their blackness. That is, there was always a "nevertheless" discursive reading of the way that Black male youth attempted to align themselves with hegemonic masculinity. When they did, they were regarded as wealthy but wasteful, successful but senseless, powerful but abusive. If those negativities were not immediately evident, there was a search for them and celebration when they appeared. And it was for this reason that the exercise of aligning themselves with hegemonic masculinity was largely symbolic and particularly precarious.

Hip Hop male youth and men confronted their real and/or anticipated economic, political and social exclusion by affirming, rendering visible and incorporating their urban working and workless poor masculinities into American capitalism with a consumer-based identity that scholars have labeled the "cool pose."[30] Like white men and youth, Black Rap practitioners understood

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[28] R.W. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity can be defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. […] this sort of hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between the cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual." She maintains that this gender articulation is fundamentally linked to power and organized for domination. Marginalized masculinities, on the other hand, are always relative to the authorization of hegemonic masculinity that has sustained their institutional oppression and physical terror. For more information on hegemonic masculinities please see, R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 42, 74, 77-81.
[29] Connell, *Masculinities*, 42, 74, 77.
[30] Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Bilson argue that 'cool' masculinity – or as they prefer to label it the 'cool pose' – was a critical psychological defense strategy available for use in black communities by mostly black men –

hegemonic masculinity as fulfilling the roles of the provider, breadwinner, procreator, and protector.[31] Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Bilson argue that practitioners used the "functional myth" of the "cool pose" to make and remake – with varying levels of success – a gendered identity that had been compromised by the surveillance and terror of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism.[32] This was a terror that had been reframed in an ongoing capacity since enslavement within the context of the *duppy state*. This pose provided black male youth and men broadly, and Rap practitioners in particular, with the opportunity to counteract the discourse of unbeing. The "cool pose" helped those who used it to suggest that they were hyper-masculine and therefore domineering, aggressive and violent. By embodying this performance, the "cool pose" reinforced the perception that: 1) black men and youth should be feared and therefore controlled, and 2) that black men and youth could not perform the functions of 'real men' because of their ongoing struggle across the historical record to serve as 'successful' heads of their households.[33] bell hooks might argue that once Rap practitioners championed the "cool pose," they were reinscribing white racist notions of Black masculinity born of discourses of unbeing rather than threatening or challenging white domination.[34] That said, when rappers took possession of the

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though not common to all black men – and an innovative and ritualized performance of masculinity. Majors and Bilson maintain that black men have used this strategy since enslavement – though it has manifested differently over time and space – to make sense of their everyday lives, survive a restrictive and stressful society, and cope with an ongoing history of oppression, social isolation, systematic discrimination, and the afterlives of slavery. While Mancini and Bilson maintain that the 'cool pose' was not necessarily dependent upon poverty, unemployment, and urban living, they suspect that it has emerged with higher frequency and intensity among working and workless poor black men. They suggest that this strategy epitomizes control, strength, pride, and charisma. And yet, they acknowledge that the while this countercultural expression can bring balance, stability, and confidence, it can also work destruction in the lives of young black men in terms of engaging in harmful behaviours and inducing fearful (white) responses towards this gender expression. Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Bilson, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), xi-xii, 2-3, 7-8.

[31] Oware, "Brotherly Love," 24.

[32] Majors and Bilson, *Cool Pose*, 7-8; Oware, "Brotherly Love," 23; Matlon, "Creating Public Fictions," 37.

[33] Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 104, 121; bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 1992), 35; Oware, "Brotherly Love," 23; William Oliver, "'The Streets': An Alternative Black Male Socialization Institution," *Journal of Black Studies* 36:6 (July 2006): 923; Matlon, "Creating Public Fictions," 37-38, 42.

[34] bell hooks, *Black Looks,* 35, 96-98.

discourse and breathed new meanings into it, this process was not the same as when the discourse was formulated and promulgated by the *duppy state* with the purpose of containment.

The "cool pose" was initially used by New York City Hip Hop practitioners and participants to generate a pleasure-based cultural expression to cope with their local surroundings. Robin D.G. Kelley argues that New York City youth gained deep visceral pleasures from creating Rap's stylistic and aesthetic conventions. These performances were, especially initially, intended to render the form and performance more attractive than the message.[35] Jeff Chang argues that this was evident in New York City youth's choice to reinvent the expressive arts by repurposing affordable resources and accessible public spaces into the tools and locations of Hip Hop culture. He maintains that they did so in part as a response to their continued exclusion from leisurely spaces in other parts of the city. Youth would set up parties in city streets, parks, and recreational facilities without city permits. They also stole city electricity from street lamps to connect their equipment.[36] Nelson George contends that the most well-known Hip Hop moment of leisure was on August 11, 1973 in the West Bronx. On that day, 16-year old Jamaican-American deejay Clive "Kool Herc" Campbell co-hosted a back-to-school party in the recreation room of his parent's West Bronx apartment building with his sister Cindy Campbell who promoted the event and suggested they ask for an entry fee. Herc used the sound system set-up that was prevalent in Jamaica as the model for his deejay scheme. At the event he played the "break" points in Soul and Funk records to generate excitement and entice attendees to dance. These "break" points were short and heavily percussive instrumental sections of Soul and Funk records that he prolonged while

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[35] Robin D.G. Kelley, "Lookin' for the 'Real' Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 135-138, 145-147.

[36] Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 76-78; Mickey Hess, *Hip Hop in America: A Regional Guide, Volume 1: East Coast and West Coast* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2010), 76-77.

speaking slang phrases into a microphone in a rhythmic style intended to punctuate the recorded music.[37] Following Herc, other prominent teenage deejays such as Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grand Wizzard Theodore used this local New York City form to expand the culture further. In an effort to generate greater interest in Hip Hop culture, these youth developed sound technology like the turntables and the beatbox, and techniques such as scratching and punch phrasing.[38]

As Rap shifted from local phenomena to translocal commodity by the late-1970s, the impact of the genre's masculinist framework was evident in its mainstream lyrical content. Rap's initial commercial success came by way of "Rapper's Delight," a 1979 single from New Jersey rappers Sugarhill Gang. The single debuted on October 13th, peaked in the 4th position, and remained on the *Billboard* chart for nineteen weeks.[39] The recording included the commonplace Rap practice of centering heteronormativity, consumerism, and individualism. Rapper Wonder Mike of Sugarhill Gang confirmed in a personal interview that in the genre's early years, Rap's central themes (Figure 1) were leisure culture, heterosexual romance, consumerism and self-

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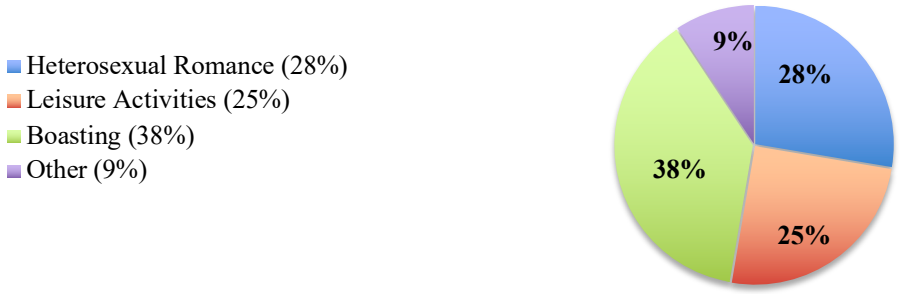
[37] "The break" refers to the instrumental or percussion section on a Disco and Funk record. It is considered a practice that stops time – meaning that it is a "break" from the main parts of the song or piece. In Hip Hop culture, the "break" became the singularly important section in a Disco and Funk record that deejays would loop for audiences to enjoy. Eventually, "the break" would inspire essential Rap production techniques (cutting, sampling, looping, and mixing) intended to craft the instrumentals of Rap records. For information on Kool Herc and the pioneering of the "break," see, Nelson George, "Hip Hop's Founding Fathers Speak the Truth," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 44-45, 50; Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop,* 79; Dick Hebdige, "Rap and Hip-Hop: The New York Connection," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 224-225.

[38] Punch phrasing involves a DJ hitting a particular break on one deck of the turntable while the record on the other turntable is still playing. In deejaying, punch phrasing – which involves drawing attention to a particular rhythm – gives shape to the flow of the record's sound in the same way that a comma or a period helps to shape the flow of a sentence. The beatbox was a machine that produced an electronic drum beat. Finally, scratching is a turntablist technique where the deejay moves a vinyl record back and forth on a turntable to produce percussive or rhythmic sounds. For more information on the above noted techniques/technology, see, George, "Hip Hop's Founding Fathers Speak the Truth," 45, 49; Hebdige, "Rap and Hip-Hop: The New York Connection," 225-226; Murray Forman, "Looking for the Perfect Beat: Hip Hop Aesthetics and Technologies of Production," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 389.

[39] Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn Presents,* 555.

aggrandizement, or what is termed as "boasting." Wonder Mike stated that he consciously wrote lyrics about, "havin' a good time without the debauchery, without disrespecting women, without inciting violence, without totally dissing [disrespecting] someone."[40] He claimed that contrary to the prevalent belief that Rap was always and largely social justice oriented from the onset, the practice of using socially critical lyrics to document urban contexts was not in widespread practice until Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five released "The Message" in 1982.[41]

Figure 1: Prevalent Rap Themes, 1980-1990



Source: Dissertation Database. Collected by Francesca D'Amico-Cuthbert, November and December 2012. The total number of recordings represented in this sample total 763 across 71 studio albums which were produced by a total of twenty artists.

The regional growth of Hip Hop culture and Rap music beyond its local urban spaces resulted in the public intimation of a close and 'natural' connection between urban space and public performances of black masculinity. As a result of the popularity of Sugarhill Gang's record in 1979, Rap could be found in other major American cities such as Atlanta, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Dallas, Kansas City, Seattle, Miami, Houston, and New Orleans.[42] Robin D.G. Kelley suggests that when Sugarhill Gang released "Rapper's Delight," Rap slowly became a site where aspects of urban life were – at least initially – unintentionally conveyed by

[40] Wonder Mike (Michael Wright of the Rap trio Sugarhill Gang). Personal interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, Ontario, February 16, 2012.
[41] Wonder Mike. Personal interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, Ontario, February 16, 2012.
[42] Alan Light, *The VIBE History of Hip Hop* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 28.

practitioners to the mainstream. By the late 1970s, the American mainstream's fascination with the supposedly pathological urban poor translated into massive sales. Kelly maintains that it is for this reason that the economics of poverty and its creative outgrowths cannot be easily divorced from the marketplace.[43] In many ways, Rap's popularity and its marketplace allure did not undermine the circulation of stereotypes and racism on which the music industry had long been premised.

Despite Rap's growing appeal among Black and white audiences alike, the ongoing racism and discrimination present in the music industry meant that rappers, producers and label executives encountered barriers to access. Iton maintains that notwithstanding Rap music's steady growth in various American urban centres, the genre did not initially have the necessary support of radio. Iton contends that one of the central reasons for this lack of support was the belief among several Black radio programmers that Rap ruptured the discourse of 'respectable blackness.' Many stations openly resisted playing Rap – though some rotated R&B recordings that featured a rapper. Iton maintains that these stations went as far as to announce that they played "all the hits and no Rap."[44] By the late 1980s, station owners, programmers and hosts at Black and mainstream radio shifted their attention towards a younger demographic with interests in Rap and R&B. This meant that Rap's visibility on radio increased as the genre and Hip Hop culture more broadly increasingly shaped the sensibilities of youth culture across racial divides.[45] Mainstream radio interest in Rap music was particularly evident in 1986 when journalists confirmed its widespread exposure following the release of Run DMC's crossover single "Walk This Way" featuring the all-white member Rock band Aerosmith.[46]

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[43] Kelley, "Lookin' for the 'Real' Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto," 135-138, 145-147.
[44] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 154-5.
[45] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 154-5.
[46] This recording peaked at the 36th position on the Billboard 100; Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn Presents,* 555; Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop and Why It Matters* (New York: BasicCivitas, 2008), 56; Robert Palmer, "Rap Music, Despite Adult Fire, Broadens Its Teen-Age Base," *New York Times*, September 21, 1986 (national edition), H23.

The release and crossover success of Aerosmith and Run DMC's "Walk This Way" generated unprecedented cross-racial appeal for Rap music even as some audience members articulated racist fan feedback. Jeff Chang argues that the cross-racial collaboration between Aerosmith and Rap trio Run DMC put both bands in a unique position to crossover into the Pop music market. Chang argues that in an unprecedented move, record producer Rick Rubin and record executive Russell Simmons (both of whom co-founded Def Jam Records) used "Walk This Way" to maneuver a double simultaneous crossover in 1986.[47] Following the record's mainstream success on Pop radio, radio station callout market research gauged that while the recording was well-liked, several fan feedback statements articulated a distaste of the Rap group and their record. One such response included the phrase "get the niggers off the air."[48] Despite this reaction, Rubin and Simmons produced a second crossover move which propelled their all-white Rap group Beastie Boys onto Black radio. Chang argues that by 1986, Run-DMC's *Raising Hell* album had successfully crossed over to white audiences, while the Beastie Boys' *Licensed to Ill* had done the same among Black audiences.[49] This double crossover positioned Rap (and later, the Def Jam label) as successful beyond its initial demographic of poor Black and brown urban teenagers. It did so by presenting two groups to two segmented markets that did not share the same race as the artists.

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[47] Def Jam's team consisted of Rick Rubin (a Jewish American music producer who understood that Rap could change the popular music terrain), Russell Simmons (an African American music promoter-turned- executive who was able to bridge Black and white tastes), Bill Stephney (an African American staffer who had far reaching connections in the print media world and album-oriented Rock radio), and Bill Adler (a white publicist responsible for marketing the label to mainstream radio and media). For more on Chang's discussion of Def Jam's team, see, Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 245.

[48] In music, callout refers to small portions of a song's chorus, usually seven to ten seconds, which is used by radio stations in market research to assist in gauging the popularity of a song by the recognizability of its hook. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 245.

[49] Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 245.

Despite the power of Def Jam's cross-racial appeal, public discourse credited Rap's mainstream ascendance to a shift towards full-length concept albums – a technique popularized by Rock artists. In 1988, journalist Peter Watrous argued that before 1986, rappers had not enjoyed paralleled crossover appeal, economic success, and visibility to album-oriented Rock (AOR). He maintained that this was because rappers promoted 12-inch singles instead of full-length albums.[50] The 12-inch record came into existence with Funk and Disco. Black artists preferred this record format because it had wider acetate groove excursions that allowed musicians to capture larger amplitude in the bass frequencies, and it enabled deejays to distinguish between the recording's loud and soft frequencies. Groove excursions allowed deejays to determine that the deeper and darker the groove, the louder and heavier the sound – an echo of what Funkadelic drummer Jerome Brailey said earlier in reference to Funk music's ability to capture the lived sense of the racialized self. The visual spacing of the acetate's grooves also made it easier for deejays in low light discothèques to approximate with the naked eye where "the break" was on the disc's surface. These records were also cheap and portable tools that could withstand wear and tear.[51] Once Rap shifted from live performance art to a primarily recorded form by the 1980s, the switch away from the 12-inch single made practical and economic sense. Between 1984 and 1988, record stores reported

[50] Peter Watrous, "Rap Enters the Album Age and the Mainstream," *New York Times*, June 12, 1988 (national edition), H33. Album-oriented Rock (AOR), which evolved from progressive rock radio in the mid-1970s, is an American FM radio format. Programmers used research and formal programming to create an album rock format (AOR) that they believed had greater commercial appeal. Beginning in the 1970s, as many more listeners were acquiring FM radios, radio stations recognized that it was increasingly important to attract a more significant market share than AM radio so that they could sell more advertising at a higher rate. As a result, many stations moved towards instituting programming rules such as a 'clock' (which meant stations played shorter songs) and rules for rotation (stricter controls over what got played on air). For more information on the AOR format, see, Kim Simpson, *Early '70s Radio: The American Format Revolution* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 120–121.

[51] Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 178-179.

that this shift to recorded art led fans to purchase $240 million worth of Rap albums, and $50 million to spend to attend Rap concerts.[52]

Rap's increased visibility and profitability in the (white) mainstream was also owing to the genre's exposure across several media outlets. With the emergence of Hip Hop magazines and newspapers like *Rap Masters*, *Word Up*, *Rap Pages* and *Right On Magazine* in the mid-1980s and 1990s, readers were exposed to Rap's reportedly authentic urban lifestyle, fashion, language, and identity politics.[53] By 1988 the premiere of *Yo! MTV Raps*, a two-hour MTV television series that broadcast nationally during the weekdays and weekends, enabled audiences outside of New York City and the communities that created Hip Hop to access Rap videos, interviews, live studio performances and comedy skits. Rap also made its way into other televised mediums such as late-night television like *The Arsenio Hall Show* where rappers were featured as guests, and evening sitcoms such as *A Different World* which narrated the lives of students at a historically black college and showcased Rap fashion and speech.[54]

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[52] Glenn Collins, "Rap Music, Brash and Swaggering, Enters Mainstream," *New York Times*, August 29, 1988 (national edition), C15, C17.

[53] In the pages of these magazines the Hip Hop lifestyle, fashion, language and identity politics was often framed as casual 'street' fashion (which was significantly different than 1970s Rap fashion which was inspired mainly by Disco and Funk music's excess) that shifted according to region and the weather in those areas (sneakers, baggy or moderately fitted jeans, tracksuits, leather pants and jackets, Kangol and fitted hats, and gold chains), urban colloquialisms, and largely hyper-masculine (or coded as masculine) posturing such as standing firmly with arms crossed to express aggression or always posing without smiling to suggest a degree of anger, toughness or displeasure. The 1980s Rap aesthetic (which was often credited to Rap trio Run DMC) reflected a noted shift from the 1970s Rap aesthetic which was inspired by Funk and Disco stage shows and costuming. For more on Hip Hip fashion, see, Elena Romero, *Free Stylin': How Hip Hop Changed the Fashion Industry* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012).

[54] For more information on the various media platforms where Hip Hop culture was made visible, see, Havelock Nelson & Michael A. Gonzalez, *Bring the Noise: A Guide to Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture* (New York City, NY: Harmony Books, 1991).

Black Popular Culture Masculinities and 'Authenticities' in the 1980s

By the 1980s, Black performances in the American mainstream were significantly shaped by the changing landscape of technology and what Richard Iton labels the overall 'visual surplus' of popular culture. Iton maintains that blackness was suddenly environmentally public in a way it had not been before. The increased circulation of Black images was due, in large part to television networks such as MTV (originally an initialism of Music Television) Fox (part of the Fox Broadcasting Company), WB (a television channel associated with Warner Bros. Entertainment Incorporated), UPN (United Paramount Network), and CW (a free-to-air television network operated by The CW Network), as well as independent film and straight-to-video markets.[55] Iton contends that this occurred parallel to the proliferation of handheld and surveillance cameras and technologies which produced a heightened performative sensibility and knowledge that one was potentially always being watched. Iton maintains that this visual surplus, paired with this performative sensibility enhanced the belief and fear that Black bodies might escape sanctions for performing supposed non-blackness and "acceptable" forms of coloredness.[56]

Despite a visual surplus market, Black artists struggled to get past the narrowcasting practices of music video platforms. By 1981, MTV dramatically changed the reach of Black musicians in the mainstream. MTV executives reasoned that as an AOR network, few Black artists fit their format.[57] Senior executive Jordan Rost claimed that the network's original research study

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[55] The Black independent filmmakers responsible for these works include Spike Lee, Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Billy Woodberry, Haile Gerima, Ayoka Chenzira, Larry Clarke, Ernest Dickerson, Mario Van Peebles, John Singleton, Charles Lane, Matty Rich, Marlon Riggs, Cheryl Dunye, Wendell B. Harris Jr., Charles Laughton, Barbara Loden, and Reginald Hudlin to name a few.

[56] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 104-108.

[57] MTV, which began broadcasting in 1981, was conceived of as a reconceptualization of television as a "visual radio" by televising a continuous twenty-four-hour stream of popular music. While the length of each video conformed to the three-minute radio convention, the visual style represented a clear departure. Static, concert-like performances gave way to visually constructed montages and short films with contained storylines. By 1989, MTV had quickly become one of the most popular networks by establishing itself in 30 million homes. For more information on the history of MTV, please see, Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce* (New York: Columbia

demonstrated that artists deemed "urban" (used here as a euphemism for Black) would 'turn off' MTV's target audience. Executives argued that if there were Black artists who did fit their criteria, they tended to be from England, of mixed-race band composition, or labelled Rock artists as in the case of Tina Turner.[58] When MTV's Mark Goodman interviewed David Bowie in 1983, Bowie questioned the logic that undergirded the network's programming. Bowie stated: "the only few Black artists that one does see are on at about 2:30 in the morning till about six. Very few are featured predominantly throughout the day."[59] Goodman firmly denied the accusation. He insisted that MTV did not use the strategy of day-parting to segregate programming timeslots. When Goodman told Bowie that MTV, "had to play the music that an entire country would like" rather than artists like the Isley Brothers or Marvin Gaye, Bowie answered: "I'll tell you what the Isley Brothers or Marvin Gaye mean to a Black 17-year old. And surely he's part of America as well."[60] Bowie's critique of MTV called attention to their discriminatory colour-line, their deliberate disregard of Black youth as a viable clientele, and the struggle among Black artists to access prime programming. This appraisal highlighted the nature of black unbeing in that it drew attention to the narrative that Black youth were not considered American citizens.

In Black musicians, artists, and administrators' oral history testimonies about MTV's programming choices, they confirmed MTV's anti-Black attitudes. Craig Marks and Rob Tannenbaum argue that the first video featuring Black artists on MTV was Musical Youth's 1982 single "Pass the Dutchie." Director Don Letts claimed that MTV featured the British boy-band

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University Press, 1998), 187-200; Julie Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 381-382; Pauline Reay, M*usic In Film: Soundtracks and Synergy* (New York: Wallflower, 2004), 97.

[58] Craig Marks and Rob Tannebaum, *I Want My MTV: The Uncensored Story of the Music Video Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), Kindle edition (accessed July 28, 2016).

[59] Perception Global Media Group TV, "David Bowie ahead of the game calls out MTV on racism," *YouTube*, Published on January 12, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4cQqKXH2Cg (accessed July 20, 2016).

[60] Perception Global Media Group TV, "David Bowie ahead of the game calls out MTV on racism."

because, "they were little and spoke in funny British accents, […and] were deemed as non-threatening and therefore non-Black."[61] Letts recalled that when he arrived at MTV for an interview, an MTV staff member told him, "I don't know how to tell you this, [but] we can't do the interview. We didn't realize you were Black."[62] That same year, Rick James requested that MTV include his 1982 "Super Freak" video in rotation. He was denied. James publicly decried MTV for its "blatant racism," arguing that, "MTV puts on little white punk groups who don't even have record deals. Blacks are missing exposure and sales."[63] MTV's head of talent and acquisition Carolyn B. Baker denied James' accusation. She contended that the station's decision not to air "Super Freak" was the result of her fear that the representations of Black female sexuality were sexist. Baker claimed: "as a Black woman, I did not want that [nearly naked women] representing my people as the first Black video on MTV."[64] The accusations of racism, however, were not without merit given that the network aired many videos by white artists who did not conform to the AOR prerequisite.[65] Here again, gatekeepers used one form or expression of blackness to silence another.

By the mid-1980s, record labels and mass media executives commoditized the dominant musical expressions of Black youth and in doing so granted Black rappers and R&B performers market access and exposure even as they subjected them to vulnerable scenarios. Iton contends that in the 1980s, the visual accessibility of Black life and blackness as a marginal constituency served as a source of pleasure for whites and some segments of black communities across the United States that did not necessarily trigger empathy or identification with the oppressed. These

[61] Marks and Tannebaum, *I Want My MTV*, Kindle edition (accessed July 28, 2016).
[62] Marks and Tannebaum, *I Want My MTV*, Kindle edition (accessed July 28, 2016).
[63] Marks and Tannebaum, *I Want My MTV*, Kindle edition (accessed July 28, 2016).
[64] Marks and Tannebaum, *I Want My MTV*, Kindle edition (accessed July 28, 2016).
[65] Marks and Tannebaum, *I Want My MTV*, Kindle edition (accessed July 28, 2016).

visual narratives often exacerbated the boundaries between the included and the marginalized. In some cases, these narratives fed gatekeepers' and citizens' needs to mobilize the security state and its capacity to monitor, incapacitate, manage and disappear the hyper-visible. While the visual surplus could be beneficial by rendering previously invisible constituents visible, it also could be inconvenient, debilitating, and generate unwelcomed levels of vulnerability and danger for both creatives and the broader black community.[66] Take for example the way that late 1980s Rap music called attention to police brutality as in the case of N.W.A's 1988 music video for "Straight Outta Compton." In this visual artefact, the Rap quintet re-enacted hostile and violent encounters with the Los Angeles Police Department.[67] Iton argues that while N.W.A produced a visual that had the potential to generate durable social justice responses, in some storytelling moments, the empathy, understanding, and consideration stopped at the borders of the marginalized and the non-white body. Iton maintains that in the context of post-Civil Rights black music, the visual tended to produce black bodies and blackness as a subjected object that was inherently unruly, surreal, outside of the frame, and in need of discipline.[68]

As rappers became more publicly visible, they were lauded in public discourse for their ability to give voice to 'authentic' Black and urban experiences in America. Within practitioner circles, rappers acknowledged that they helped construct reality-based depictions, experiences, and sentiments of urban life. David Beer argues that rappers drew their authenticity from their ability to use the genre as a detailed set of accounts that captured the material, sensory and emotional aspects of their localized worlds. By focusing on powerlessness, hopelessness, risk, nervousness

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[66] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 104-108, 125-6.
[67] N.W.A, "Straight Outta Compton," (music video) 1988, *Straight Outta Compton* (Ruthless Records / Priority Records, SL 57102, 1988). The video opens with Dr. Dre articulating: "you are now about to witness the strength of street knowledge." Here, Dr. Dre is talking about the ability of the Rap group to deliver a visual that grants strength and power to the subjugated knowledge of racialized experiences with the police.
[68] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 106-7.

and magnified fear in their often violent and unstable environments, rappers granted listeners access to experiences that were obscured from plain sight. Rap texts were particularly useful to those who were unfamiliar with these spaces. Listeners learned about how the urban landscape impacted the physical and emotional wellbeing of urban residents. Rappers used recordings to disclose intricate details to their listeners and construct complex ethnographies of the invisible. In doing so, they became the imaginative insiders of these spaces, or what Beer calls urban ethnographers.[69] Within the context of de-industrialization, the supposed authenticity of Rap's urban ethnography was linked to gendered notions of strength, persistence, self-reliance, individualism, and survival. All of these qualities reinforced Rap's association with hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, by using feminized musical forms such as Disco and Funk as the base over which to build Rap lyrics and insist upon a performance of (hyper)masculinity, rappers engaged in a literal reclamation of masculinity and perhaps even the hardened gender binary as was the case in the wider culture.[70]

Throughout the 1980s, Rap's association with the discourse of "the urban" reinforced public perceptions of urban spaces as racialized and gendered problem spaces. Fran Tonkiss reminds us that the city is an important co-created and discursive space where social ideas and performances of race, gender, class, and sexuality take shape.[71] Tonkiss argues that the city has

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[69] David Beer, "Hip-hop as Urban and Regional Research: Encountering and Insider's Ethnography of City Life," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38:2 (2014), 677-679, 680-681.
[70] Echols, *Hot Stuff,* 217, 230.
[71] Fran Tonkiss argues that urban spaces house real, dense and material conditions and realities that structure social relations and processes. These are spaces that produce unique moments of social encounter, inclusion, and division. On the other hand, urban spaces are socially constructed, symbolic, imagined and embodied landscapes that are shaped by social relations, action and meanings. The urban is also what Henri Lefebvre has called a representational space – that is, a location that is (re)produced through perception, symbols, and language. And so, as city space is demarcated, different forms of signification are produced, identified and defined – that is, social categories, social groups, and social problems. Once the work of thought overlays these material spaces, so too are the urban identities that are constituted through the meanings, ideas, and images associated with the urban. And so, while cities are literal and material geographies, they are also discursive spaces inhabited by bodies that are coded and imbued with meanings that very often suggest difference. For more information on the urban as discursive space, see, Fran

long been depicted as a literal and discursive 'problem space' in that certain urban spaces – namely, the 'inner city' – are imagined as containers rife with social division, disease, pathology, deprivation, delinquency, disorganization, and disorder.[72] The label 'inner city' has functioned as a code to spatialize and covertly reference race – particularly the intersection of blackness and poverty. This label has also demarcated racialized spaces as unstable, unsafe and outside of the social and public order. The bodies that occupied those blighted spaces were also differentiated as social contagion.[73] Mark Hutter adds that the city has long been gendered and socially constructed as masculine due to its designation as the public sphere. With the onset of industrialization, urbanization, and later de-industrialization, the city became the "province of men" yet again as well as a material manifestation of the masculine ideas of order and authority.[74]

Entangled with discourses of 'the urban' were notions of 'Rap authenticity' which dictated that 'real' Rap expressions were hyper-masculine, working and workless poor performances of blackness. Iton argues that many Black youth carved out space for themselves within the ranks of Rap by imagining, constructing and engaging with extreme representations of Black life such as Black as urban, Black as hyper-masculine and heteronormative, and Black as 'underclass.'[75] And yet, Iton maintains that while class-based definitions of blackness informed Rap authenticity, practitioners were not always from working and workless poor constituencies. In fact, many recognizable mainstream rappers were of the working-to-middle classes and/or lived in suburban neighbourhoods. Some examples included Run DMC, De La Soul, Public Enemy, Queen Latifah,

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Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 1-4, 30-32.

[72] Mark Hutter, *Experiencing Cities* (New York: Allyn & Bacon, 2012), 63-65; Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 30-31, 46-48.

[73] Mike Davis, "Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control the Ecology of Fear," *Open Magazine Pamphlet*, No. 23 (Westfield, NJ: Open Media, 1992), 155; Hutter, *Experiencing Cities*, 224; Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory*, 36, 48-49, 94-97, 103.

[74] Hutter, *Experiencing Cities,* 265-267.

[75] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 164-165.

A Tribe Called Quest, and Common among others. Iton suggests that these Rap artists managed class differences, fragmentation and dilemmas by drawing attention away from themselves and their non-underclass identities. Black working-to-middle class rappers often prioritized their racial identity and consciousness while submerging their class status. Iton suggests that their class status could go undetected or unacknowledged because class differences among Black people have always been complicated, nuanced and porous, and the Black working and middle classes often reside in such close proximity.[76] Iton argues that by the late 1980s, practitioners could also present a scripted version of 'authentic' blackness because that script had widened. That is, Rap's complex cross-section of racial, class and spatio-social constituencies now included white, middle class and suburban artists. Iton maintains that these complexities generated interesting questions about authenticity and who could legitimately speak for the broader imagined 'black community.' The outcome of this dilemma was that 'the urban' became a mystical space that produced and maintained 'authentic blackness.' In this narrative, 'the urban' was discursively labelled the 'inner' city, even as this 'gritty' innermost core was actually the fringes of that space. In 'the urban,' black authenticity was claimed and performed, and class complexities were, at least superficially, resolved.[77]

Scholars acknowledge that Rap authenticity was a slippery construct that privileged hyper-masculine working and workless poor blackness. Kembrew McLeod argues that Rap authenticity was a socially agreed upon construct with particular patterns of symbolic action and meaning. Rappers agreed upon this notion of Rap authenticity to establish the genre as a subculture, defend

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[76] Iton maintains that mixed income black neighbourhoods or immediately adjacent middle and lower income constituencies often share and attend identical recreational, secular, spiritual and professional spaces (schools, grocery stores, hospitals, churches, recreational spaces, etc.). In addition, black families tend to be much more heterogeneous which also increases the tendency for diverse class constituencies to interact frequently with one another even as they might be segregated from non-Blacks as well as from each other in suburban spaces. For more information, please see, Iton, *The Black Fantastic,* 162-164.
[77] Iton, *The Black Fantastic,* 162-8.

Rap against appropriation and mainstreaming, and demarcate boundaries between the Rap 'insider' and 'outsider.' McLeod maintains that rappers invoked authenticity for six reasons: the social psychological (the challenge of staying true to yourself versus following mass trends); the racial (the conversation that pits notions of whiteness against blackness); the political-economic (the debate over street credibility versus becoming commercially successful); the gender-sexual (aggressive and "tough" traits versus effeminate and "soft" tendencies); the social-locational (the act of affiliating with the street/or urban versus the suburban, which often is racialized as "white"); and the cultural – namely the nostalgic versus contemporary consumer culture.[78] In his findings, McLeod discovered that the definition of Rap authenticity was: staying true to yourself, identifying as Black, locating yourself as the underground and 'old school' of Hip Hop culture rather than the mainstream, and expressing a 'hard' masculinity associated with 'the street.'[79]

The discourse of Rap authenticity was also shaped by the intersection of historically rooted folkloric representations of Black hyper-masculinity and notions of Black unbeing. In the 1970s and 1980s, Black men and youth built a Rap identity by re-imagining the Stagolee paradigm into the "badman" trope which was particularly evident in the stock characters of 1970s blaxploitation films – namely, the inner city drug dealer, pimp, hustler, and gangster.[80] The "badman" flouted authority, was non-conformist, eschewed established norms, lived on the margins of black

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[78] Kembrew McLeod, "Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation," *Journal of Communication* 49:4 (1999), 138-145.
[79] McLeod, "Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation," 139.
[80] The badman trope was first articulated in the American folk ballad of Stagolee in 1895 which was about the murder of Billy Lyons by "Stag" Lee Shelton, a Missouri pimp. In the ballad, Shelton was represented as a shadowy and uncertain figure associated with the subcultures of bordellos and prostitution; his identity was closely linked to sex, class, criminality and a defiant revolutionary way of life. Over the twentieth century, the Stagolee paradigm represented a black male ethos and symbol of the enduring black male struggle against white oppression and racism. This folk hero was conceived of as dangerous, impulsive, vulgar and daring in his displays of resistance. By the 1970s, the Stagolee character was taken up by Blaxploitation in film characters such as Sweetback of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) and Youngblood Priest of *Super Fly* (1972), as well as by black activists such as Bobby Seale (a member of the Black Panther Party). For more information on Stagolee, see, Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), and Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'N' Roll* (New York: Penguin Group, 1990).

communities that understood him to be heroic and threatening, and took pride in generating fear among whites and middle class African Americans. This outlaw anti-hero celebrated his racialized marginality, hyper-masculinity, hyper-sexuality, criminality, violence and invulnerability.[81] bell hooks contends that during Rap's early formation, Hip Hop youth recognized this anti-hero in the iconography of Black Power militants who were commodified as one-dimensional patriarchal, rage-filled and predatory icons that engaged in concomitant violence.[82] Michele Wallace argues that this form of gender performance affirmed a discourse that dictated that Black men garnered their patriarchal value and capital via the metaphorics of phallic power and a predatory and sexually aggressive manhood located in the urban streets of America.[83]

This Rap authenticity was produced alongside and against other racialized gender discourses and black popular culture sounds that tested the boundaries of performance and expressed a range of ambivalent, fluid and binary gender portrayals.[84] By the 1980s, artists such as R&B stars Michael Jackson and Prince used the unstable grounds of popular culture to produce discursive disruptions that tested, revised, affirmed or negated national discourses about racialized gender.[85] Richard Ripani contends that in the 1980s, Black artists decided to "sweeten" their sound

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[81] Davarian L. Baldwin, "Black Empires, White Desires: The Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip Hop," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 236; Perry, *Prophets of the Hood,* 103-104; Oware, "Brotherly Love: Homosociality and Black Masculinity in Gangsta Rap Music," 22, 25-26.
[82] bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 56-60.
[83] Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Verso, 1999), 15-19, 25-26.
[84] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies,* 11-14.
[85] Between 1979 and 1990, Michael Jackson and Prince dominated the mainstream market – appearing on the *Billboard* Top 100 forty-six times and the R&B chart fifty-seven times. Richard J. Ripani argues that while both artists achieved 103 chart rankings across *Billboard*'s Top 100 and Top R&B charts (tallied based on airplay and singles sales), Jackson was among the top three *Billboard* Top 100 artists, while Prince was one of the top three artists on the R&B chart. For more information see, Richard J. Ripani, *The New Blue Music: Changes in Rhythm & Blues, 1950-1999* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 125, 128; Joel Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn Presents: Top R&B/Hip Hop Singles, 1942-2004* (Menomonee Falls, Wis.: Record Research Inc., 2004), 284, 471.

to increase their mainstream appeal in a music market shaped by racial hierarchy.[86] This included reducing their sonic grittiness, adding "clean" grooves and smooth chord progressions spread over percussion, strings and horn instruments, and using falsetto vocals.[87] Anne Danielsen argues that this sound was often imagined as "beige"/interracial or hybridized given that Black artists were attempting to transgress hardened music categories. They did so by combining African American music-making traditions, with sweetened sonic landscapes (characteristic of the Pop music category) and genres predominantly racialized as 'white' (Rock, New Wave and Techno).[88] Jakeya Caruthers and Alisa Bierria contend that Jackson's and Prince's "beige" sound redefined the mainstream which had historically been an arena of racial confrontation and negotiation. These artists produced a space where interracial musical techniques were filtered through a hyper-racial framework that continued to segregate Black artists on radio, television and in sales charts.[89]

Against Rap authenticity, Jackson's repertoire demonstrated how he used the fluidity of gender and racial images to provoke a public dialogue about transracialism in a hyper-racial mainstream where white and Black fans consumed his performances. For example, in Jackson's 1982 "Thriller" video he was depicted on a date with a young woman at a movie theatre while watching a character (also played by Jackson) on screen admit "I'm not like the other guys, […] I'm different."[90] Immediately thereafter the young man (in the film) transformed into a werewolf and Jackson (who is on the date) chases his girlfriend out of the theatre and reminds her that "it's only a movie" while also singing that "something evil [was] lurking in the dark." As the couple

[86] According to discourses about music instrumentation, melody driven music was associated with whiteness and intellectualism, while rhythmically centered music was likened to blackness and the body. For additional discussion about the process of "sweetening" sounds, see Ripani, *The New Blue Music*, 179.
[87] Danielsen, "The Sound of Crossover," 162-165.
[88] Danielsen, "The Sound of Crossover," 164.
[89] Jakeya Caruthers and Alisa Bierria, "Stay with Me: Reflections on Michael Jackson, Sound, Sex, and (Racial) Solidarity," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 23:1 (2001), 126.
[90] Michael Jackson, "Thriller," (music video) 1982, *Thriller* (Epic Records, QE 38112, 1982).

walked down a dark alley, they were encircled by dancing zombies – one of whom was also Jackson transformed yet again. Just as Jackson (as a zombie) reached out for the young woman, she yelled and woke from what the audience discovered was a nightmare. Jackson – now reverted into teenage-boy form – offered to take her home. Just before leaving, Jackson turned towards the camera and his eyes transformed from human form to a supernatural character.[91]

Against hardened performances of masculinity, members of the media read Michael Jackson's expression of racialized gender as transgression. Journalist Michiko Kakutani argued that by stressing the supernatural, "Thriller" embodied the notion of metamorphosis. Kakutani noted that Jackson's personal aesthetic throughout the 1980s mobilized the theme of transgression – transgressing the white/black phenotype and queering the gender binary in such a way that presented Jackson as existing in a grey zone.[92] These physical transgressions led the public to associate Jackson with transracialism and transgenderism. As Alice Echols notes, Jackson's artistic choices made it possible to imagine him as a cyborg.[93] Jackson created a "boundary creature" that did not require a stable and essentialist identity. His "boundary creature" could also simultaneously reside in many worlds – male/female, black/white, human/animal, and child/adult.[94] The video concurrently implied that Jackson's grey-zone was both a character of fascination to be consumed, as well as a suspicious and terrifying threat. Central to public concerns over artists like Jackson (as well as his contemporary Prince) were questions over the pairing of their racial and gender

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[91] Michael Jackson, "Thriller," (music video) 1982, *Thriller* (Epic Records, QE 38112, 1982).
[92] Michiko Kakutani, "Why These Pop Singers Have Risen to Superstardom: Why Two Singers Have Risen to Superstardom," *New York Times*, September 2, 1984 (national edition), H1.
[93] Donna Haraway argues that bodies, like gender, "are not born; they are made" as biomedical constructs. In her theorization of cyborgs, she argues that a 'cyborg' is a hybrid creature composed of organism and machine that can structure any possibility of historical transformation. Gender is a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices. A cyborg does not require a stable, essentialist identity. Haraway argues that it is far more valuable to study affinity rather than identity as oppositional identity consciousness comes as a result of otherness, difference, and specificity. For more information on cyborgs, see Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
[94] Echols, *Hot Stuff,* 294.

transgressions – particularly given that throughout the 1980s Prince appeared transracial, while Jackson defied and redefined racial designation. Journalist Michiko Kakutani described Jackson and Prince as "a perfectly matched pair of alter-egos" who interwove black and white musical idioms; challenged the race barriers and definitions of sexuality through "androgyny"; and transcended traditional stereotypes.[95] Kakutani claimed that audiences were attracted to Jackson and Prince's constructions of "biracial appeal," "racial ambiguities," and "androgyny" because they "flirt[ed] with forbidden boundaries, [… and gave] the illusion that the performer embrace[d] all possibilities."[96] Kakutani pointed out that Jackson's performances highlighted transracial expressions and queering the boundary lines of sexuality all the while appearing "sunnily upbeat and wholesome." Prince on the other hand presented interracial articulations and gender fluidity that were imagined as "insidious, threatening and darkly sexual."[97] Joseph Vogel argues that among some of the common descriptions of Prince in the press other than "gay" were the epithets "faggot," "freak," and "pervert."[98]

In the post-Civil Rights era, public discourses over the "regendering of black popular music" also dictated which Black performances could rightfully engage in politically useful acts in a (white) public forum. According to Richard Iton, Rap and R&B were reconfigured along a gender divide whereby each genre was discursively framed as a 'masculine' or 'feminine' expression that fit squarely within the binary. Iton maintains that 'masculine' Rap was celebrated for its detail, precision and ephemerality, while 'feminine' R&B was imagined as bourgeois, suburban, and Christian. Both genres were differently positioned in terms of their ability to

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[95] The hyper-racial indicates an overt and possibly stereotyped marking of race, whereas trans-racial is the traversing or dissolving of racial categories.
[96] Kakutani, "Why These Pop Singers Have Risen to Superstardom: Why Two Singers Have Risen to Superstardom," *New York Times*, September 2, 1984 (national edition), H1.
[97] Kakutani, "Why These Pop Singers Have Risen to Superstardom."
[98] Joseph Vogel, "Something you'll never understand: Prince and Gender," in *This Thing Called Life: Prince, Race, Sex, Religion and Music* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2018), Kindle edition (accessed June 28, 2019).

articulate the concerns of the political narrowly construed. Rap was framed as a masculinist space where 'rightful' and 'authentic' political debate was housed and where concerns were articulated. R&B was constructed as a feminine space where private sphere negotiations took place. These included expressions of love, care, intimacy, and vulnerability. Iton argues that these parameters dictated that when practitioners and consumers transgressed these boundaries they were imagined as queer or queering the boundaries. This was certainly the case when black women engaged with Rap, and black men participated in R&B culture.[99]

One of the central ways that black male performers transgressed and queered the expectations of racialized masculinity during the "regendering of black popular music" was through dance technique. Take for example Michael Jackson's music videos for "Bad" and "The Way You Make Me Feel." Jackson used dance to articulate a breadth of masculine expressions that included aggression, pacifism, sensuality, and sensitivity. In "Bad," Jackson was depicted as a pacifist who countered violence with homosocial dance. Jackson began the video alone in his bedroom and later re-appeared as a peacemaker who used dance to deter hyper-masculine expressions of gang violence. Susan Fast argues that Jackson's "Bad" masculinity queered the performance of conventional masculinity by depicting an androgynous loner who inhabited the domestic and feminized sphere and later admonished violence through dance in the public and masculine sphere. In the final dance sequence, the seedy public underground parking lot was depicted as a homosocial space where male bodies explored the sensuous somatic self by moving together and creating a new male physicality.[100] Similarly, in Jackson's 1987 "The Way You Make Me Feel" video he linked aggressive talk, self-assertive body gestures, sexually suggestive movements, and gritty vocals to emphasize hyper-masculinity. Jackson followed a young woman

[99] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 106-7, 152-4.
[100] Susan Fast, "Michael Jackson's Queer Musical Belongings," *Popular Music and Society*, 35:2 (2012), 283-284.

through an urban streetscape encircled by a multiracial group of young Black, Latinx, and white men who encouraged the pursuit. In the final sequences, Jackson moaned while the image of an exploding fire hydrant – a visual reference to an orgasm – filled the screen. As he danced alongside his male companions, Jackson thrust his pelvis in various positions reminiscent of intercourse. Despite such a climactic and hyper-sexualized ending within the confines of homosocial dance, in the final frame, Jackson appeared in a sensitive embrace with his female love interest.[101]

As Black R&B artists queered the gender binary, a number of dissenting voices within Black popular culture circles spoke out against these representations of masculinity. For example, in comedian Eddie Murphy's 1983 stand-up show *Delirious,* he argued, "Michael Jackson is a good-looking guy but ain't the most masculine fellow in the world."[102] Five years later once Rap music had entered the mainstream and firmly delineated hyper-masculinity as the measure of 'authentic' black manhood, Murphy intensified his critique in his stand-up *Raw* performance. Murphy mocked Jackson's lack of aggression, his petite frame, his high-pitched voice, his reclusive nature, his "good, clean and wholesome" persona, and his choice to take Brooke Shields to the Grammys after making a public abstinence statement. Murphy argued, "Brooke Shields is the whitest woman in America. […] And this nigger took her to the Grammys and nobody said shit. If I took Brooke Shields to the Grammys, y'all lose your mind, cause y'all know Brooke would get fucked that night."[103]

Public dialogue over how Black masculinity should be articulated and authenticated in the public sphere indicated that there was disagreement and resistance within black communities over

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[101] Michael Jackson, "The Way You Make Me Feel," (music video) 1987, *Bad* (Epic Records, EK 40600, 1987); Michael Jackson, "Bad," (music video) 1987, *Bad* (Epic Records, EK 40600, 1987).
[102] *Eddie Murphy Live On Stage: Delirious*, Directed by Bruce Gowers, 1983, Eddie Murphy Productions, Running Time 1:09.
[103] *Eddie Murphy Raw*, Directed by Robert Townsend, 1987, Eddie Murphy Productions, Running Time 93 minutes.

gender performance. Murphy rationalized that Jackson's effeminacy, abstinence, and inability to perform Black male hyper-sexuality had convinced white Americans that Jackson was both exceptional and non-threatening. Andreeana Clay argues that Murphy's critique highlighted the racist limitations of Black masculinity in public discourse insofar as Jackson's persona challenged the stereotype that Black men were merely sexual aggressors.[104] Murphy's critique also questioned Jackson's authenticity as a Black man by demarcating Jackson outside of the parameters of hegemonic masculinity and possibly even those of blackness. The discourse that Murphy was engaging dictated which performances of Black masculinity were deemed appealing and acceptable, and which were considered disturbing and objectionable.

Public discourses about untidy, fluid and ambiguous performances of racialized gender were indicative of a public that did not entirely have the language to describe these explorations of masculinity. Beginning in 1979, press photos for Prince's nine 1980s albums depicted an artist that luxuriated in non-conformity, blurred the gender binary, and grafted 'female attributes' onto a male physiognomy.[105] Prince was popularly depicted in stiletto-heeled boots, ruffled blouses, crop-tops, scarfs, fur, feather garments, lace gloves, vests open to the navel bearing his chest hair, satin bikini underpants, sequined jumpsuits, bright eye make-up, black eyeliner and mascara, wigs, pouty lips, and highly coiffed hair.[106] When his body was exposed, Prince's nearly nude male form was

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[104] Andreana Clay, "Working Day and Night: Black Masculinity and the King of Pop," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 23:1 (2011), 10,11.

[105] Prince's insistence on blurring the gender binary was primarily evidenced in his artist branding iconography. Throughout the 1980s, Prince used "the love symbol" in his promotional materials and custom guitar designs. The symbol (a circle with an arrow pointing downward and a short line mid-way through the arrow) was inspired by the astrological symbols denoting the planet Mars (the male representation) and the planet Venus (the female representation). Journalist Margaret Rhodes argued that this symbolism represented: "a new, [fully integrated] sexual and gender fluid identity." For more information on the Prince "love symbol," see Tom Morello, "The Paisley Shredder," *Rolling Stone: Special Collectors Edition* (Prince: The Ultimate Guide to His Music and Legend), August 25, 2016, 67.

[106] Prince's 1980s albums included: *Dirty Mind* (1980), *Controversy* (1981), *1999* (1982), *Purple Rain* (1984), *Around the World in a Day* (1985), *Parade* (1986), *Sign O' The Times* (1987), *Lovesexy* (1988), and *Batman* (1989).

depicted as petite, slender and vulnerable, while also muscular, hairy-chested and in possession of a well-endowed penis. Don Kulick argues that transgenderism reflects an adaptability of gender identities outside of the bounds of a static binary spectrum of female-male traits. Kulick concedes that transgendered men must work to establish their credentials as men in relatively self-conscious ways. In the 1980s, many journalists lacked the language and theoretical understanding to describe Prince's identity construction as an example of trans iconography.[107] For example, throughout the *New York Times'* coverage of Prince, he was commonly described using the terms "renegade," "androgyny," "stylized salaciousness," "flamboyantly minimal stage costume," "play[ing] coy with conventional racial and sexual definitions," and a "harbinger of another sexual revolution."[108]

Unlike Rap performances, R&B artists used black popular music to challenge heteronormative desire by displaying sex as a fluid, multi-faceted, and an equitable act that did not necessarily obey the rules of patriarchy. This was particularly evident in the lyrical work of Prince. For example, in his 1982 recording "International Lover," Prince defined intercourse as libidinous, exploratory, and transcendent. He stated, "We are now making our final approach to satisfaction / Please bring your lips, your arms, your hips / Into the upright and locked position / For landing / Can you feel it?"[109] While this description could be read as hyper-masculine, his lyrics also highlighted a deep commitment to female pleasure and the female body. Prince was not merely searching for self-indulgent desire or expressing the patriarchal intent to dominate. Prince's deep commitment to female pleasure led his bandmates Lisa Coleman and Wendy Melvoin to tell *Out*

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[107] For more on transgenderism see, Don Kulick, *Travesti: Sex, Gender and Culture Among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
[108] Stephen Holden, "Pop: Prince, a Renegade," *New York Times,* March 28 1981 (national edition), 14; Vince Canby, "Screen: 'Purple Rain,' With Prince," *New York Times*, July 27 1984 (national edition), C5; Robert Palmer, "The Pop Life: Is Prince Leading Music To a True Biracism?" *New York Times*, December 2, 1981 (national edition), C26.
[109] Prince, "International Lover," 1982, *1999* (Warner Brothers Records, 9 23720-1 F, 1982).

magazine that he was "a fancy lesbian."[110] And yet, while Prince's description of lovemaking was not entirely hyper-masculine, he often used the practice of sex to reinforce his heteronormativity. Kulick reminds us that in the context of intercourse, 'the bed' becomes the area where gender is genuinely established. That is, some males make themselves into 'men' by penetrating their partner, while others make themselves into 'women' by allowing themselves to be penetrated.[111]

Aside from gender fluidity, R&B artists used race ambiguity and transgression to meet the expectations of black audiences as well as the (white) mainstream. Head of Warner Brothers Records A&R Larry Waronker recalled that in a 1977 studio session, Prince explicitly told him "don't make me Black."[112] Journalist Alan Light argues that Prince wanted to avoid being pigeonholed as a "Black" artist due to a fear that it would limit his access to mainstream radio and narrow his potential audience. Prince's identity throughout the 1980s was shrouded in mystery and rumours.[113] In his 1981 recording "Controversy," Prince sang: "Am I Black or white, am I straight or gay? / Controversy / […] People call me rude / I wish we all were nude / I wish there was no Black and white / I wish there were no rules."[114] "Controversy" was indicative of how Prince created curiosity and misperception around his racial identity. Light argues that while Prince was commonly identified in press articles as "mulatto," the confusion over his racial makeup increased once Prince was quoted giving contradictory information. Prince told some media outlets that his mother was white, while also "a mix of a bunch of [other] thing[s]."[115] In other cases, he insisted

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[110] Barry Walters, "The Revolution Will Be Harmonized," *Out*, April 16, 2009, http://www.out.com/entertainment/2009/04/16/revolution-will-be-harmonized (accessed July 16, 2016).
[111] Kulick, *Travesti*, 126.
[112] Joe Levy, "Prince's Revolution: Rock star, funk lord, genius, provocateur: He created a world—but in the end, he found he could only go it alone," Excerpted from ES 1261, May 19th, 2016, *Rolling Stone: Special Collectors Edition* (Prince: The Ultimate Guide to His Music and Legend), August 25, 2016, 67 13, 16.
[113] Alan Light, *Let's Go Crazy: Prince and the Making of Purple Rain* (New York: Atria Paperback, 2014), iBook Edition, 17.
[114] Prince, "Controversy," 1981, *Controversy* (Warner Brothers Records, BSK 3601, 1981).
[115] Light, *Let's Go Crazy,* 41.

that he was the son of a half-Black father and Italian mother. Former girlfriend Jill Jones claimed that Prince borrowed his mixed-race identity from her following a conversation where he claimed that he too had the phenotype markers to "make that work."[116] Here, Prince mobilized what Daniel McNeil calls the "symbolic roles of mixed race bodies, and the various strategies and performances of artists deemed mixed race," to stake out a place in popular culture and ascend the ranks of the mainstream music industry. McNeil contends that the use of these strategies demonstrates ongoing attempts "among Blacks in the Atlantic to define a Black identity against (the possibility) of a mixed-race identity."[117]

In the case of artists like Prince, the use of fluidity, hybridity and ambiguity was purposeful and used as part of marketing his brand and his band to a broad audience. In 1983, Prince told *Rolling Stone*'s Debby Miller that, "there was a lot of pressure from my ex-buddies in other bands not to have white members in the band. […] But I always wanted a band that was Black and white."[118] White keyboardist Lisa Coleman argued that the mixed-race and mixed-gender character of Prince's band "the Revolution" was the result of a dedication to integration and community. Prince told journalist Kurt Loder that his "dream was that we'd be Fleetwood Mac mixed with Sly and the Family Stone," with the perfect couple of "black people, the perfect couple of white people, couple of girls, [and] couple of Jews."[119] Light suggested that once Prince replaced African

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[116] Light, *Let's Go Crazy,* 41.
[117] Daniel McNeil, *Sex and Race in the Black Atlantic: Mulatto Devils and Multiracial Messiahs* (New York: Routledge, 2010), xvi.
[118] Debby Miller, "Prince's Hot Rock: The Secret Life Of America's Sexiest One-Man Band," *Rolling Stone,* April 28, 1983, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/princes-hot-rock-the-secret-life-of-americas-sexiest-one-man-band-19830428 (accessed July 10, 2016).
[119] Kurt Loder, "Purple Majesty," Excerpted from RS 429, August 30, 1984, *Rolling Stone: Special Collectors Edition* (Prince: The Ultimate Guide to His Music and Legend), August 25, 2016, 24-25; Joe Levy, "Prince's Revolution," 16, 18.

American musician Dez Dickerson with white guitarist Wendy Melvoin in 1982, he knew that he had achieved the perfect blend of a mixed-race and mixed-gender band.[120]

Unlike Rap, R&B in the early 1980s allowed Black artists to provide racially heterogeneous audiences with fluid presentations of race and gender without fear that these representations would necessarily undermine their profitability and popularity. Wendy Melvoin admitted to journalist Barry Walters that she believed Prince exploited her romantic relationship with Lisa Coleman as the token "gay reps" in order to add more mystery to his own identity. Melvoin recalled being at a photo shoot for the *Purple Rain* promotional poster when Prince paused the shoot, walked over to her and insisted that she wrap her arm around Coleman's waist to suggest their intimate partnership. She claimed that creating mystery around their sexuality was all part of Prince's calculated branding strategy to attract more mainstream attention.[121] As journalist Joe Levy has argued, Prince's fluidity allowed the band to sell the fantasy of a gender, racial and sexual utopia that equally evoked a mix of fear, confusion, curiosity, and attraction within the American mainstream.[122]

While the brand of Black masculinity exhibited by R&B's two rising stars was not explicitly rejected, newspaper discourse indicated that some of the public was confounded by displays that did not conform with gender and race 'rules.' In the late twentieth century, while parts of the American public – namely the LGBTQ community that was just as multi-racial – embraced Jackson and Prince's representations, others found their performances unsettling. For example, in 1981 journalist Robert Palmer argued that while Prince's iconography enticed audiences, his album sales did not reflect an equal level of attraction. He maintained that Prince, "[was] the most

[120] Alan Light, "Purple Rain," *Rolling Stone: Special Collectors Edition* (Prince: The Ultimate Guide to His Music and Legend), August 25, 2016, 80.
[121] Walters, "The Revolution Will Be Harmonized."
[122] Levy, "Prince's Revolution," 10.

controversial contemporary rock star precisely because he challenge[d] sexual and racial stereotypes. […] His music confound[ed] racial categories by combining elements of white pop and rock with Black dance rhythms."[123] Light argues that many Americans could not quite understand his Rock/R&B hybrid, his mixed-race and mixed-gender band, and his boundary-crossing sexuality.[124] Palmer reinforced America's lack of racial liberal-mindedness when he stated that, "the fact that white rock fans and radio stations have tended to banish [Prince] to the [narrow-casted] Black-music ghetto says more about racism in contemporary pop music circles than it does about Prince's songs or his presentation."[125]

Mainstream anxieties over boundary transgressing black popular music masculinities emerged quite poignantly in live performance contexts. Take for example a 1981 tour incident with Prince and the Rolling Stones where much of the Rock audience's reaction paralleled the anti-Disco rhetoric and behavior of the late 1970s. Following an invitation to open two concert dates on the Los Angeles leg of the Rolling Stones' tour, Prince was forced to cut both of his sets short. According to Peter Wolf, the frontman of the J. Geils Band which was also on the concert bill, on October 9th Prince entered the stage and opened his trench coat to reveal bikini briefs. The audience began yelling and throwing fruits on stage. Two nights later, as Prince began his set, the audience pelted glass bottles on the stage.[126] Journalist Robert Palmer argues that "suggestions of androgyny in his fluid body movements and flamboyantly minimal stage costume were more than a little reminiscent of some of Mick Jagger's early performances, but the almost entirely white Rolling Stones audience apparently failed to make the connection."[127] Palmer suggested that the

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[123] Robert Palmer, "The Pop Life: Is Prince Leading Music To a True Biracism?" *New York Times*, December 2, 1981 (national edition), C26.
[124] Light, *Let's Go Crazy,* 63.
[125] Palmer, "The Pop Life," C26.
[126] Levy, "Prince's Revolution," 16.
[127] Palmer, "The Pop Life," C26.

racial difference between audience members and Prince inspired a dislike of the Black musician that was rooted in perceptions of racialized gender.[128]

Michael Jackson and Prince's gender transgressions also generated a degree of uncertainty and confusion among rappers over R&B's use of Black male sexuality and the signifiers of hegemonic masculinity. In a later reflection, rapper Ice T told journalist Alan Light: "we didn't know what the fuck Prince was. He was like a player, he kept bad bitches, […] he was a pimp. He's got a[n] ill hood side to him too. […] Prince is dope, he's a motherfucker, but he was really hard to figure out."[129] Reflecting on Michael Jackson, rapper Sister Souljah promised that with Rap, "you will not find a Black male rapper who sounds like DeBarge or some other soprano singer. […] rappers are bringing back the notion of strong, masculine voices."[130] Souljah's Public Enemy bandmate Chuck D affirmed her viewpoint when he argued that the "Black man is already emasculated, and this standard is projected to Black males through R&B music."[131] The opinions of 1980s rappers regarding the gender fluidity and transgressions of male R&B artists indicated that not all Black fans were comfortable with what they interpreted as the feminization of Black masculinity in the public sphere. And yet, while rappers articulated discomfort over gender-bending, it was clear that even when Black artists exhibited hyper-heterosexuality while performing a 'questionable' masculinity, this was not read as entirely troubling.

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[128] Palmer, "The Pop Life," C26.
[129] Light, *Let's Go Crazy,* 64.
[130] Charise Cheney, "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism," *The Journal of African American History* 90:3 (Summer 2005), 283; David Mills, "Reality in a New Rapping: Arrested Development, Drawing Raves with a Message of Maturity," *Washington Post*, July 19 1992, Sunday show section; *Tour of a Black Planet,* Directed by Moses Edinborough, Released September 1, 1990, Griot Filmworks Production Company.
[131] Cheney, "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation." 283; Mills, "Reality in a New Rapping," Sunday show section; *Tour of a Black Planet,* Directed by Moses Edinborough, Released September 1, 1990, Griot Filmworks Production Company.

As Rap entered the mainstream and began taking up space on radio, television and in print, Prince was among its most vocal critics. According to Prince's tour manager Alan Leeds, by the mid-1980s Prince was accused by Black music fans for not "being black enough" because of his Rock & Roll sound and success and his performance of Black masculinity.[132] As Rap gained greater traction in the mainstream music market, and rappers were discursively framed as *the* authentic performance of blackness, claims of Prince's inauthenticity increasingly plagued him. In response, Prince wrote his 1987 *The Black Album* which included "Dead On It," an explicit critique of Rap music. Using the technique of rapping, Prince claimed: "I turned on my radio to hear some music play / I got a silly rapper talking silly shit instead / And the only good rapper is one that's dead. […] See the rapper's problem usually stem from being tone deaf / Pack the house then try to sing / There won't be no one left."[133] Throughout the recording, Prince insisted that rappers were talentless musicians who made meaningless art and should not have a visible place in mainstream culture. Journalist Neal Karlen reported that before the public heard this recording, *The Black Album* was withdrawn from distribution. While Prince would release a limited edition of the album in 1994, in 1987 he decided to abandon the entire project. In its place, Prince released his 1988 album *Lovesexy*, an optimistic pop-oriented album with questions inspired by religion.[134]

Prince's critique of Rap music highlighted the extent to which other black popular culture expressions of masculinity were being increasingly framed as inauthentic and Black artists were feeling the pressure to conform to a hardened binary. In a 1990 *Rolling Stone* interview, Prince admitted, "I was very angry a lot of the time back then, […] and that was reflected in that album

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[132] David Browne, "The Black Album," *Rolling Stone: Special Collectors Edition* (Prince: The Ultimate Guide to His Music and Legend), August 25, 2016, 85.
[133] Prince, "Dead On It," 1987, *The Black Album* (Warner Brothers Records, 1-25677-DJ, 1987).
[134] Neal Karlen, "Prince Talks," Excerpted from RS 589, October 18, 1990, *Rolling Stone: Special Collectors Edition* (Prince: The Ultimate Guide to His Music and Legend), August 25, 2016, 40, 41.

[*The Black Album*]."[135] Prince's former manager Bob Cavallo conceded that the mid-1980s was a difficult period for Prince. As a result of Rap's popularity, Prince felt pressure to shift his creative direction towards a Rap aesthetic because it gradually became an expectation of Black male artists and the measure by which masculinity and blackness were gauged in the mainstream. Cavallo admitted that Prince was quite embarrassed at the time to ask him, "should I learn to Rap?"[136] Prince was conflicted over Rap's mainstreaming and how that affected the evolution of his artistic direction and the concerns expressed over his racial "inauthenticity." He questioned Rap's musical viability and worried that he would have to familiarize himself with this genre in order to remain relevant in the mainstream and among Rap's core African American audience.

By the latter 1980s, Prince's fear that the hyper-masculine genre of Rap would eclipse the popular music market and determine expressions of black masculinity in the cultural realm quickly became a reality. By 1988, the *New York Times* reported that Rap's mainstream reach was now felt in older, more racially diverse, middle class and suburban neighbourhoods. Journalist Glenn Collins argued that Rap music's appeal drove changes to the nation's language, fashion, and advertising in both urban and suburban environments irrespective of class or color. His article also included a lengthy lexicon of Hip Hop slang titled "Words to Rap By" to prove how deeply Hip Hop slang had pervaded American communication. This new language, he argued, was traceable to African American vernacular and urban speech patterns.[137] The inclusion of this article in the *New York Times'* coverage suggested that the editors thought it necessary to familiarize their urban

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[135] Neal Karlen, "Prince Talks," Excerpted from RS 589, October 18, 1990, *Rolling Stone: Special Collectors Edition* (Prince: The Ultimate Guide to His Music and Legend), August 25, 2016, 40, 41.
[136] Trent Clark, "Prince Once Pondered If He Should Learn to Rap," *HipHopDX*, April 23, 2016, http://hiphopdx.com/news/id.38475/title.prince-once-pondered-if-he-should-learn-to-rap (accessed July 10, 2016).
[137] Glenn Collins, "Rap Music, Brash, and Swaggering, Enters Mainstream," *New York Times,* August 29, 1988 (national edition), C15, C17.

and suburban, middle-to-upper class readership with a new 'language' spreading out from New York City's racialized neighbourhoods to the rest of America.

Women and Sexual Scripts in Masculinist Rap

Across the 1980s, Rap performance increasingly thrived on the use of misogyny, homophobia and the subordination of women and 'effeminate' bodies in order to function. bell hooks argues that Rap's conventions required that the "feminine" had to be rejected in order for a phallocentric discourse and hierarchical patriarchal paradigm of competitive masculinity to be embraced.[138] This was particularly evident in the tendency among rappers to use Rap lyrics to construct Black women as responsible for the pathologies of black communities. Imani Perry argues that this desire to assert Black male subjectivity at the expense of Black female subjectivity would materialize in the over-representation of female bodies in lyrics as intimidating, sexually promiscuous, unstable, pathological, threatening, and contrary to the strengthening of African American communities.[139] For example, in the 1988 recording "Girls L.G.B.N.A.F" Ice T insisted that women were promiscuous sex fiends who lied about their true desires.[140] He rapped, "Homeboys, you know the situation / […] nose in the air, turnin' you down / when you [the woman] really wanna say, 'Yo baby let's get down [have sex]."[141] Chuck D of Public Enemy similarly constructed women as deceptive and threatening in "Sophisticated Bitch" (1987) when he rapped:

> All pretend. Can't be her friend unless you spend. / […] She doesn't want a man, all she wants is a pay. / […] Nasty girl, a stone cold freak. / […] And if you ain't got it, she'll turn you away. / […] Little is known about her past / [She] used to steal money

[138] bell hooks, *Black Looks,* 98; Cheney, "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation,'" 282-283.
[139] Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, 118-119; Baldwin, "Black Empires, White Desires: The Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip Hop," 236-237.
[140] The title of Ice T's song, "Girls L.G.B.N.A.F" is an abbreviation intended to mean, "Girls, let's get butt naked and fuck."
[141] Ice T, "Girls L.G.B.N.A.F," 1988, *Power* (Sire/Warner Bros. Records, 25765, 1988).

> out her boyfriend's clothes / Never got caught so the story goes / She kept doin' that to all her men.[142]

In these songs, male rappers created cautionary tales that helped justify one of the benchmarks of the "cool pose": an insistence on putting women in their place by dominating them aurally in lyrics and visually in music videos. By doing so, male rappers hoped to regain patriarchal footing, exercise power over women, and employ women as a commodity expression of wealth, power and sexual prowess amid relative economic powerlessness.[143] This practice was more than a historic emasculation. Rather, these representations of women reflected broader cultural practices that extended beyond Rap music.

In response to Rap patriarchy, female rappers and fans of Rap music produced a "Hip Hop feminism" ideology that addressed the day-to-day complexities and contradictions of their desire. Hip Hop journalist Joan Morgan coined the term 'Hip Hop Feminist' in an effort to build on the gains of feminism, respond to black feminists before her, and address the generational differences among women of the Hip Hop generation.[144] Black feminist thinkers such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, Angela Davis and Patricia Hill Collins imagined Black women's relation to sexism, class oppression, and racism through the prism of intersectionality in that they argued that Black women were positioned within structures of power in fundamentally different ways than their white women peers. These scholars also acknowledged that their feminism, was in part, a response to their exclusion from second-wave feminism questions and concerns.[145] In Morgan's Hip Hop

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[142] Public Enemy featuring Vernon Reid, "Sophisticated Bitch," 1987, Yo! Bum Rush the Show (Spectrum City Studios, 527 357-2, 1987).
[143] Perry, *Prophets of the Hood,* 127; Oware, "Brotherly Love: Homosociality and Black Masculinity in Gangsta Rap Music," 24.
[144] Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist Breaks it Down* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 36, 52-55-59.
[145] For more on Black Feminist Thought, see, Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (January 1, 1989): 139–167; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York:

Feminism, she argued that unlike earlier feminists, young women of the Hip Hop generation desired a politics that addressed the complexity of their humanity and not merely the cumulative sum of their gendered oppression.[146] Morgan argued:

> I was also looking for permission to ask some decidedly un-P.C but very real questions: Can you be a good feminist and admit out loud that there are things you kinda dig about patriarchy? […] Is it foul to say that imagining a world where you could paint your big brown lips in the most decadent of shades, pile your phat ass into your fave micromini, slip your freshly manicured toes into four-inch fuck-me sandals and have not one single solitary man objectify – I mean roam his eyes longingly over all the intended places – is, like, a total drag for you? […] That, truth be told, men with too many 'feminist' sensibilities have never made my panties wet, at least not like the reformed thug nigga who can make even the most chauvinistic of 'wassup, baby' feel like a sweet, wet tongue darting in and out of your ear. In short, I needed a feminism brave enough to fuck with the grays.[147]

Such was the case with lyrics like Salt-N-Pepa's "Shake Your Thang" when the duo rapped,

> We was on a dancefloor shakin' our thing / To a funky beat with a go-go swing / Everyone was watching, they stared in shock / Amazed at how Salt and Pepa was rock-/ In the place with a smile on my face / Some got upset and then tried to base / They called us nasty, said we danced dirty / Claimed we were freaks, cheap, even flirty / Pepa got pissed and pulled out a pump / I was all set not to jet but to jump / Spin broke it up and asked not to break / Said, "They don't understand the way you..." / Shake your thang, owww / Do what you wanna do / I can't tell you how to catch a groove / It's your thang (It's your thing) / Do what you wanna do / I won't tell you who to sock it to.[148]

Vintage Books, 1981); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000);

[146] Joan Morgan argues that Hip Hop Feminists were not interested in embracing the "victim" (read women)/"oppressor" (read men) model of feminist discourse. Many Hip Hop Feminists increasingly understood feminism as an inaccessible politics that was produced and consumed in academic spaces and did not represent their daily experiences – that is, living in urban America amid the post-industrial crisis, the rise of the carceral state and the dismantling of the welfare state. For more, see Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 36, 52-55.

[147] Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost,* 56-59.

[148] Salt-N-Pepa, "Shake Your Thang," 1988, *A Salt With a Deadly Pepa* (FFRR/Next Plateau, 828 364-2, 422 828 364-2, 1988).

Morgan claims that unlike the feminism of their predecessors, Hip Hop Feminists addressed female complicity in their oppression, and the desire to produce a functional feminism that rejected the hypocrisy of self-censorship.[149]

As female rappers and fans of Rap music mobilized Hip Hop Feminism, they also shaped the politics of the 'Terrordome' to speak of and back to the gender politics and dynamics of Rap and the broader world they inhabited. Morgan argues that when Hip Hop Feminists combined their brand of feminist politics with Hip Hop's impulse to 'keep it real,' they were declaring that they,

> Need[ed] a voice like our music – one that samples and layers many voices, injects its sensibilities into the old and flips it into something new, provocative, and compelling. And one whose occasional hypocrisy, contradictions and trifeness, guarantee us at least a few trips to the terrordome, forcing us to finally confront what we'd all rather hide from.[150]

Here, Morgan used the 'Terrordome' as a discursive space where participants would be forced to reckon with uncomfortable subjects. This 'truth' highlighted the need to create gender politics that juxtaposed the voices of the many to expose the messiness of contemporary racialized gender relations and performances.

Within the tightly bound masculinist geographies of Rap, female rappers mobilized their Hip Hop Feminism to render Rap politically useful on issues of gender and women's rights in much the same way their blueswomen predecessors did with the Blues. By the 1980s, female rappers accessed artistic spaces, articulated women's subjugated knowledge, and negotiated the politics of the Black female experience by utilizing Rap's "badman" trope at times in their posturing and/or lyrical content. Female rappers used this performance to express their romantic and sexual desire, challenge dominant discourses about women's subordination, explore issues of abandonment and abuse, establish a public discourse on male violence, and express a sense of

[149] Morgan, 56-59.
[150] Morgan, 60-62.

female and community empowerment and autonomy.[151] Angela Y. Davis argues that Black female Blues musicians first established this technique of coding oneself as "male." They did so in order to exercise agency in a proto-feminist genre, generate public conversation about taboo subjects, and articulate sentiments typically imagined as male such as artistic prowess, a language of power, subversive tricksterism, and a sense of rage and frustration.[152]

Female rappers used Hip Hop feminism as part of 'Terrordome' efforts to deconstruct Rap's masculinist structure and discourse and render visible the politics of Black womanhood within a white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Tricia Rose argues that female rappers struggled to strengthen their insider status and garner respect within Rap's masculinist practitioner circles.[153] Female rappers responded to this challenge by appropriating modes of dress considered masculine; embodying "cool pose" posturing by gender bending in their walk, talk and demeanor; pitching the timbre of their voices in a deeper register like their male counterparts; crafting highly skilled Rap deliveries and lyrics; and articulating notions of aggressive competitiveness in their lyrics as is evidenced by the dissertation sample on female boasting in Rap (Figure 2).[154] By using a performance of maleness as a source of power, female artists became interlopers who stretched normalized gender binaries. They created a framework whereupon they could trespass within what had been coded as a male-dominated space. Through this interloping practice, female rappers were able to render visible the subjugated knowledge of Black women on the logic and practice of

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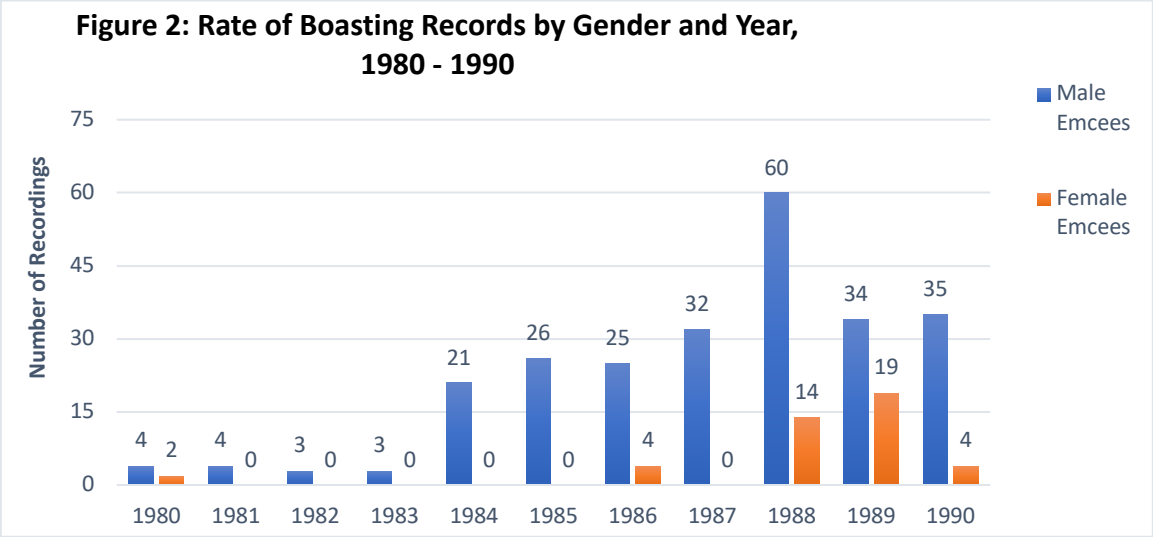
[151] Signifying practice is considered an intrinsically subversive rhetorical device whereby the speaker uses words and phrases that are indirect, repetitive, and meant to foster new meanings outside of the mainstream discourse. For additional information on signifying practice, see Dick Hebdige, "Style as Homology and Signifying Practice," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. by Andrew Goodwin and Simon Frith (London: Routledge 1990), 60-61.

[152] Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 22-27; Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, 155-156, 160, 164; bell hooks, *Black Looks*, 290, 288.

[153] Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 1-4.

[154] According to the dissertation sample (evident in Figure 2), boasting emerged as one of the keys sites where female rappers acted as interlopers to disrupt the masculinist project of Rap music.

patriarchy, sexism and misogyny. Rose contends that as female rappers coded themselves as "male" they problematized, interrupted, disrupted, and disarticulated the urban landscape as a space that was shaped only by race, class and the authority of masculinity.[155]



Source: Dissertation Database. Collected in November and December 2012. According to the sample, male rappers relied on boasting in each year of the decade, while women did not. In some cases, this was because the women examined in the sample did not release albums that year.

Despite the efforts of female rappers to render Rap politically useful, some media critics nonetheless misinterpreted their artistic deliveries as 'feminine' and therefore substandard. On the subject of boasting, journalist Jon Pareles argued that unlike their male counterparts, female rappers focused on the superiority of their ego-centric raps rather than aggressively mowing down their opponents to prove their pre-eminence.[156] However, examples like MC Lyte's 1988 battle rap

[155] Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 1-4.
[156] Jon Parales, "The Women Who Talk Back in Rap: Women Rap Back: Fewer Guns, No Mercy," *New York Times*, Oct 21, 1990 (national edition), H33.

"10% Dis" indicated otherwise.[157] In the recording, MC Lyte targeted female rapper Antoinette who had attacked her in an earlier recording. MC Lyte rapped:[158]

> I'ma [sic] serve then burn y[ou] like a piece of toast / [....] A battle's no trouble / […] This thing called Hip Hop, Lyte is rulin' it / I hate to laugh in your face, but you're funny / Your beat, your rhymin', your timin', all crummy / On the topic of rappin', I should write a pamphlet. Better yet a booklet / Your rap is weak homegirl, and it's definitely crooked / […] This ain't as hard as MC Lyte can get / And matter of fact, you ain't seen nothin' yet.[159]

While MC Lyte's insults were fixed on skill rather than mocking Antoinette's attributes, she used her expertise to prove the inherent weakness of her artistic nemesis. Pareles also observed that female rappers did not pretend to be invulnerable or infallible as their male counterparts often did. Instead, they doled out mercy kindly, sparingly, and selectively even when they intended to be hostile.[160] However, examples such as Salt-N-Pepa's 1988 recording "A Salt With A Deadly Pepa" indicated that female rappers were equally capable and willing to deliver hostile lyrics. For instance, they rapped: "call in the troops, we're comin' out blazin' / […] Title after title we take / Rack 'em up we're gonna tally 'em / and when we're done you're gonna need a valium / To calm your nerves, after I bomb your nerves."[161]

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[157] According to Paul Edwards, battle rap can occur on recorded albums, though it is often recited spontaneously in live performance. It is typically organized as a competition between two rappers; the practitioners compete in order to impress the audience with the superiority of their skill. For more information on battle rap, see, Paul Edwards, *How To Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2009).
[158] Following the release of rapper Antoinette's recording "I Got An Attitude" in 1987, from which she was alleged to have stolen the instrumental from Audio Two's recording "Top Two," MC Lyte responded in the battle record "10% Dis." MC Lyte took offense because she was the younger sibling of Audio Two's members Giz and Milk, and as such she felt inclined to defend her brothers. For more information on the controversy see, Mickey Hess, *Icons of Hip Hop: An Encyclopedia of the Movement, Music and Culture, Part I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 125; Samantha Hunter "MC Lyte Speaks on the Legacy of Her Iconic Debut 'Lyte as a Rock'," *OkayPlayer*, https://www.okayplayer.com/music/mc-lyte-lyte-as-a-rock-interview.html (accessed January 21, 2017).
[159] MC Lyte, "10% Dis," 1988, *Lyte as a Rock* (First Priority Music/Atlantic Records, 0-96704, 1988).
[160] Parales, "The Women Who Talk Back in Rap," H33.
[161] Salt-N-Pepa, "A Salt With A Deadly Pepa" 1988, *A Salt With A Deadly Pepa* (London/Next Plateau, 828 364-2, 1988).

As female rappers stretched and transgressed the gender and sex binary to contest Rap's increasingly narrow field of play, they often did so to the detriment of their reputations. Echols argues that prior to the 1970s, Black female musicians tended toward sexual circumspection and discretion for fear of reinforcing assumptions about Black women's supposed sexual looseness. Genres such as Disco and R&B allowed Black performers to engage with a discourse about sexual politics that was much more unambiguously sexually explicit. In the early 1980s, The Sequence, the first mainstream female Rap trio, rarely transgressed the gender-sex binary. Like their Disco and R&B predecessors, The Sequence was depicted in press photos as heterosexual, hyper-feminine, glamorous, sultry, dressed in sequins and high-end fashion, perfectly coiffed and in possession of assertive sexuality that safely catered to the male gaze.[162] By the mid-to-late 1980s, female rappers who challenged the construct popularized by The Sequence were often imagined as deviant, pathological, or emotionally and sensually immoral. Gwendolyn D. Pough argues that Black male rappers and male Rap fans were troubled by female artists who disrupted these patriarchal and heterosexual gender expectations and by extension compromised the patriarchal potential of Black men.[163] Female rappers continued to contest the genre's closed gender-sex frameworks and narratives by introducing a number of performance scripts.

Female rappers rendered Rap politically useful on the subject of gender by mobilizing the "mother of civilization" script to renegotiate contemporary feminist concerns. Gwendolyn Pough and Dionne P. Stephens argue that female rappers used Rap music to renegotiate contemporary feminist concerns and iconography by presenting a gender and sexual script rooted in and built

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[162] Echols, *Hot Stuff,* 85; The Sequence, cover for *Sugar Hill Presents The Sequence*, (Sugar Hill, SH-250, 1980); The Sequence, cover for *The Sequence*, (Sugar Hill, SH-267, 1982); The Sequence, cover for *The Sequence Party*, (Sugar Hill, SH-9200, 1983).
[163] Pough, *Check it While I Wreck It*, 117-118.

upon historical conceptions of Black womanhood.[164] The "mother of civilization" script was rooted in historical racial uplift projects and it re-worked and widened the Mammy stereotype which tended to represent Black women as dark-skinned, asexual and supposedly unattractive by Western standards. Female rappers used this gender-sex performance to re-define traditional interpretations of racialized beauty and equate qualities previously considered unappealing with notions of self and community empowerment. The "mother of civilization" championed Afrocentric consciousness, and celebrated the naturalness of Black hair, body size diversity and the full range of Black skin color.[165] This script was most evident in the performances of Queen Latifah. For example, on the cover of her 1989 album *All Hail the Queen,* Latifah was pictured in an upright and combative posture, dressed in a full piece militant-inspired black and gold uniform, with her hair wrapped in a brightly coloured cloth commonly associated with West Africa, and her neck adorned with an Afrocentric medallion and wooden earrings. In Latifah's accompanying music video and lyrics for "Ladies First," she mobilized the "mother of civilization" script to promote the message that Black women were beautiful, divine, intellectual, powerful, and bearers of a new generation of prophets.[166]

When female rappers introduced "the lesbian" script, they disrupted Rap's heterosexual relations and performances and used their performances to challenge the genre's patriarchal expectations. Unlike rappers who used the "mother of civilization" script, those who were scripted

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[164] According to symbolic interaction theory, individuals develop a sense of their sexual selves through the sexual messaging, which is based on symbolic meanings that have been associated with sexuality and this takes place within continually changing cultural and social contexts. As such, sexuality is "socially scripted"; it is learned, acted out, and changes based on the social context within which it is performed. For African American women, sexual scripts are rooted in a narrow set of negative stereotypes that have changed little over the twentieth century. For more on sexual scripts, see Dionne P. Stephens, "Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas and Dykes: The Sociohistorical Development of Adolescent African American Women's Sexual Scripts," *Sexuality & Culture* (Winter 2003): 5.
[165] Stephens, "Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas and Dykes," 8-9, 20-25, 31-32; Pough, *Check it While I Wreck It*, 117-118.
[166] Queen Latifah, cover for *All Hail the Queen*, (Tommy Boy, TBCD-10221989, 1989).

as lesbians were framed as gay rather than sexless because they did not draw their power from a sexuality that appealed to men's desires. Dionne P. Stephens argues that rappers often mobilized "the lesbian" to rework the matriarch stereotype, reject the male gaze, and challenge the discourse that a woman's value was drawn from her sexuality. Some men, however, attributed this script to female rappers' desire to express bitterness for being maltreated emotionally or physically by a man, or for having not experienced "superior" sex with a male partner. Stephens contends that male rappers and fans frequently misunderstood and misconstrued "the lesbian" script as an attempt to deny men sex and phallic power.[167]

Even as Rap was masculinist, female rappers coded as "the lesbian" rendered Rap politically useful to produce gender articulations that were unruly and rejected the constraints of patriarchy. Judith Halberstam argues that these "female masculinities" are often received by heteronormative and homo-normative cultures as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment. These gender transgressions are framed as the rejected and insufficient scraps of dominant masculinity that women long to possess, but that are always out of reach. Halberstam maintains that this performance is not merely the opposite of female femininity or the female version of male masculinity. Rather, it is "the unholy union of femaleness and masculinity" that has the potential to produce wildly unpredictable gender articulations. It can mark sexual alterity and heterosexual variation, pathology, and/or healthy alternatives to the histrionics of conventional femininities. As such, female masculinity is often imagined as most threatening when coupled with a lesbian desire that denies the male gaze.[168] Lilian Faderman argues that by the 1980s, "butch" re-emerged as a protest identity against the conformity and sexual monotony of radical lesbian-

[167] Stephens, "Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas and Dykes," 8-9, 20-25, 31-32; Pough, *Check it While I Wreck It*, 117-118.
[168] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 1, 9, 29.

feminism. These women rebelled against enforced femininity and claimed the right not to dress, act and talk 'like a woman.' As women who were unwilling to obey the rules of patriarchy, female rappers who mobilized "the lesbian" script shaped their persona for their purposes rather than the entertainment of men.[169] Within Rap culture, black female masculinity – or what Halberstam coins the "butch in the hood" – was used to re-negotiate the terms of stereotypical Black womanhood as less feminine than the mythic norm of white femininity. These rappers did so by counter-appropriating as performance the association of blackness with excessive hyper-masculinity.[170] While coding themselves as butch lesbian, these women also ignored or openly denied claims that they were queer (as in the cases of Queen Latifah and MC Lyte) by visually and aurally presenting themselves as desiring men.[171]

As female rappers carefully navigated Rap's heteronormative gender-sex frameworks, they drew attention to how Rap could nonetheless provide those subordinated by its masculinist logics space to articulate knowledge of Rap's power relations. Take for example MC Lyte's 1980s albums where she was often represented on her cover art as unfriendly and uninviting given the lack of a smile and her tomboyish posturing. On her *Lyte as a Rock* (1988) and *Eyes on This* (1989) album covers MC Lyte did not draw on her power to appeal to men's sexual desires. In both cases she was dressed in male-associated attire (a full-piece suit and jogging suit) and expressing a set of uninviting and aggressive facial expressions. On her 1988 album, she was juxtaposed to a faceless woman who was wearing a black miniskirt and red high heels.[172] In MC Lyte's video iconography, she complicated the script even further. For example, in the video for "Lyte as a Rock" MC Lyte

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[169] Lilian Faderman, "The Return of Butch and Femme: A Phenomenon in Lesbian Sexuality of the 1980s and 1990s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2:4 (April 1992), 587-592.
[170] Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 1, 9, 29.
[171] Claude Summers, *The Queer Encyclopedia of Music, Dance, and Musical Theatre* (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2004), 205.
[172] MC Lyte, cover art for *Lyte as a Rock* (First Priority Music/Atlantic Records, 0-96704, 1988); MC Lyte, cover art for *Eyes on This* (First Priority Music/Atlantic Records, 91304, 1989).

was dressed in both a skirt and blouse and a dress. Lyte wore these outfits while occupying powerful positions as an Egyptian queen, a 1930's gangster, and an imprisoned Black radical who idolized Malcolm X. In each of these representations she was depicted as an equal to or dominating men. Her power was framed as legitimate, independent of the assistance of men, and free of the male gaze.[173] In "Paper Thin" from the same 1988 album, Lyte performed in a heterosexual narrative where she exposed men for their questionable dating practices and reminded her audience that she would happily remain independent if a man did not meet her needs.[174] By blending the hyper-feminine and hyper-masculine, Lyte disarticulated and disrupted the masculinized "cool pose," challenged female subordination and domesticity, and drew attention to female rappers' knowledge regarding gender and power relations.

Challenges to Rap's patriarchal expectations emerged less poignantly with the introduction of a third script: "the freak." This script was rooted in the historical conceptualization of the Jezebel which reduced Black women to exotic, promiscuous, over-sexed, materialistic, and a feminine beauty who fit the white beauty standard. As contemporary examples of Black female unbeing, "freaks" were imagined as sexually aggressive and in possession of an insatiable and dangerous sexual appetite through which they channeled their power. The limitation of "the freak" was that she could only exercise her power within the confines of an established heterosexual exchange where her partner desired her behavior. Male rappers negatively constructed women who performed this script as fallen, unrespectable and unworthy of a long-term relationship.[175] Female rappers, however, used this script to exercise independence and agency over their bodies and desires. Take for example the cover art for Salt-N-Pepa's 1988 album *A Salt With A Deadly Pepa*

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[173] MC Lyte, "Lyte as a Rock" (music video), *Lyte as a Rock* (First Priority Music/Atlantic Records, 0-96704, 1988).
[174] MC Lyte, "Paper Thin" (music video), *Lyte as a Rock* (First Priority Music/Atlantic Records, 0-96704, 1988).
[175] Stephens, "Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas and Dykes," 8-9, 20-25, 31-32; Pough, *Check it While I Wreck It*, 117-118.

where the trio was gendered as hyper-feminine in their dress, pictured in a close embrace while looking into the camera in a sexually suggestive manner, and in possession of a beauty aesthetic that privileged the white beauty standard. The trio possessed shiny, long and straight hair, along with porcelain clear and light/lighter skin than some of their Rap women peers. Unlike MC Lyte's scripting, Salt-N-Pepa's presumed lesbianism capitalized upon the male gaze and was intended for heterosexual male consumption. This meant that their expression of lesbianism was not labeled as threatening to patriarchal power, nor did it necessarily attempt to deny men sex.[176] And yet Salt-N-Pepa also used their platform to openly deny a desire for men. In the trio's recording "Tramp" they rapped:

> On the first date he thought I was a dummy / He had the nerve to tell me he loved me / But of course I knew it was a lie, y'all / So I dissed him, I said you's a sucker / […] You ain't treatin' me like no prostitute / Then I walked away, he called me a teaser.[177]

Like their blueswomen predecessors, Salt-N-Pepa coded themselves as male and femme to create a wider field of play, and gesture to the subjugated knowledge of Black women that included the sexist double standards of sexual desire, and the misogynistic interactions between men and women while dating.

Even as female rappers used Rap to negotiate the genre's phallocentric space, they continued to face challenges at the production stages of music-making and in terms of creative control. In 1989, journalist Carol Cooper argued that Rap was a male-centric world where women were second-class citizens in the realm of production and writing credits. Cooper maintained that women's writing and production abilities were often controlled, ignored, unacknowledged, and overruled by male 'superiors.'[178] According to Cooper, rapper Princessa confessed that while she

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[176] Salt-N-Pepa, cover art for *A Salt With A Deadly Pepa* (New Plateau Records, 828 364-2, 1988).
[177] Salt-N-Pepa, "Tramp," *Hot, Cool & Vicious* (Champion, CHAMP 1007, 1987).
[178] Carol Cooper, "Girls Ain't Nothin' But Trouble?" *Essence Magazine*, April 1989, 80.

had written and produced her music for three years, male label owners were unreceptive to her material at virtually every Rap label. She claimed that "only when I led them [label executives] to believe that a man had written or produced my stuff did they show interest."[179] Cooper contended that men would often help women contribute "something [gender] appropriate," and in doing so, helped to determine what was appropriately 'feminine.'[180] Cooper also cited the case of Salt-N-Pepa whose fan base often articulated concerns over the group's lack of writing credits. Fans often pointed to the rumour that Salt-N-Pepa's male producer Hurby Azor (who was dating the group's lead lyricist Cheryl "Salt" James) had complete control over their creative efforts. Salt however defended Azor and denied the claim that he controlled the group's creative direction. She argued that while "there [were] a lot of rhymes we wr[o]te on our album, but we d[idn]'t go for the credit."[181] Cooper's exposé demonstrated that Rap's gendered frameworks were deeply rooted in paternalistic and patriarchal practices that determined how labels understood an artist's catalogue, hired rappers, oversaw the production of their projects, and conveyed who the speakers for 'the black community' were.[182]

Queer Male Identities and the Cultural Logic of Rap

Rap music was also a difficult landscape for queer male identities which were always read as out of place within Rap's masculinist logic. Connell argues that patriarchy positions homosexual masculinities as effeminate and therefore as the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity.[183] bell hooks maintains that while homophobia was undoubtedly

[179] Cooper, "Girls Ain't Nothin' But Trouble?" 80, 119; Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture and the Public Sphere,* 116-118.
[180] Cooper, "Girls Ain't Nothin' But Trouble?" 80, 119.
[181] Cooper, "Girls Ain't Nothin' But Trouble?" 80, 119.
[182] Cooper, "Girls Ain't Nothin' But Trouble?" 80.
[183] Connell, *Masculinities*, 78.

present in and across African American communities, there were spaces where an unspoken or candid anti-gay sentiment and discomfort with same sex desire was prominently expressed.[184] Rap geographies qualified as one of these spaces where a collective and candid fear, disdain, and outright rejection of queer bodies existed. These homophobic sensibilities translated into tangible forms of oppression, violence, and discrimination against those who openly identified and/or were accusatorily "outed" as gay, bisexual, or transgendered.[185]

In order for Rap to function as a masculinist space, homophobic and heterosexist discourses were required to strengthen the legitimacy of the "cool pose." Matthew Oware and Marc Lamont Hill argue that queer identities became indispensable to constructing the "cool pose" myth. Rap's antigay climate, in conjunction with the "cool pose," allowed practitioners to regulate sexual boundaries through the sophisticated surveillance practice of lyrically "outing" practitioners. This practice allowed rappers to claim their heterosexuality, assert control over allegedly queer bodies, and isolate and demean them in the process. It also normalized the surveillance of queer bodies and identities in Rap music. Within this atmosphere, the threat of public exposure posed a professional threat and the perception of a fractured masculinity from which there were few routes of recovery.[186] While the threat of outing presumably straight rappers was considerable for male and female artists, the professional stakes were far higher for men.

In Rap music, the costs of surveilling male queerness, or what has been imagined as a fractured masculinity, was serious in that artists never fully recovered. Such was the case in 1989 when an unidentified source reported that rapper Big Daddy Kane was rumored to have confessed

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[184] bell hooks, "Homophobia in Black Communities," in *Talking Back* (Boston: South End, 1989), 120-126.
[185] The term outed, used informally, references the act of either revealing one's homosexuality, or the act of being exposed as queer against one's will by another.
[186] Oware, "Brotherly Love: Homosociality and Black Masculinity in Gangsta Rap Music," 25; Marc Lamont Hill, "Scared Straight: Hip Hop, Outing and the Pedagogy of Queerness," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 384-388.

on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* that he had contracted HIV through sexual intercourse and was dying of AIDS. This moment is considered the first public "outing" in Rap history. Kane's rumored confession emerged against the dominant perception that AIDS was a 'gay disease.' Public attention quickly shifted from Kane's health to his sexuality.[187] Prior to this rumor, Kane had carefully crafted his image via iconography that reinforced the heteronormative "cool pose." He did so through boastful lyrics, a pimp caricature, and a patriarchal name associated with his sexual prowess. For example, on his 1988, 1989 and 1990 album covers Kane was photographed among nearly naked women who were eager to serve him in environments that alluded to yacht living and Graeco-Roman excess. In the images, Kane was shirtless, muscular, adorned with gold chains, and gazing into the camera lens with sexually suggestive facial expressions. This representation reaffirmed Kane's sexual prowess and economic power.[188] Hill maintains that despite this iconography, Kane's sexual identity was quickly called into question following his public "outing," and he spent much of the early 1990s salvaging his hegemonic masculinity. He did so by vigorously denying the rumors, reiterating his status as an HIV-negative heterosexual male through recordings, and making public appearances including a 1990 voter registration drive. While the rumors eventually subsided, Hill argues that Kane's career never fully recovered.[189]

Rappers often "outed" their peers through instances of lyrical feuding, or what is termed "beefing" in an effort to inspire speculation over their opponents' manhood and by extension their authenticity in Rap music. While lyrical outings were not always intended to create genuine speculation about another practitioner's sexual identity, they were the most accessible sites for

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[187] Hill, "Scared Straight: Hip Hop, Outing and the Pedagogy of Queerness," 383-384.
[188] Big Daddy Kane, cover art for *Long Live the Kane* (Cold Chillin'/Warner Bros. Records 25731,1988); Big Daddy Kane, cover art for *It's a Big Daddy Thing* (Cold Chillin'/Warner Bros. Records, 25941, 1989); Big Daddy Kane, cover art for *Taste of Chocolate* (Cold Chillin'/Warner Bros. Records, 26303, 1990).
[189] Hill, "Scared Straight," 383-384.

reinforcing heteronormativity and transmitting anti-gay beliefs. In beef records, when rappers made allusions to another practitioner's queerness, they were usually attempting to humiliate that rapper or gain the upper hand in a lyrical quarrel. This tendency was most evident in the "Bridge Wars" feud. Beginning in 1985, MC Shan of the Juice Crew released "The Bridge" where he boasted that his neighbourhood of Queensbridge was the birthplace of Hip Hop culture. KRS-One of Boogie Down Productions responded in 1986 with "South Bronx" in an attempt to defend the South Bronx as the rightful birthplace of the culture.[190] By 1987, the lyrical jousting escalated with the release of "The Bridge Is Over" where KRS-One referenced the alleged homosexuality of Juice Crew members and the sexual promiscuity of the group's only female rapper. KRS-One rapped: "I finally figured it out, [Mr.] Magic ['s] mouth is used for sucking / Roxanne Shante is only good for steady fucking."[191]

The intensity of homophobia in the lyrical jousting of the Bridge Wars battle demonstrated the extent to which male rappers felt pressured to lay claim to hegemonic masculinity in order to secure their authenticity and popularity. In 1987, Queensbridge rapper Butchy B released "Go Magic" in defense of the Juice Crew as a promotional ad for radio DJ Mr. Magic's WBLS radio show. He rapped: "I heard about you suckers [Boogie Down Productions] with your Juice Crew diss / all you suckers with the lipstick need to get a dress / Looking like a faggot, jocking [engaging in flirtatious behaviour] Mr. Magic / acting like a parasite, leach or maggot."[192] To humiliate Boogie Down Productions, Butchy B accused KRS-One of effeminate behaviour through references to his mode of dress, grooming practices and conduct.[193] KRS-One responded in three

[190] MC Shan, "The Bridge," 1988, *The Bridge/The Used To Do It Out In The Park* (Cold Chillin' CC3503, 1988); Boogie Down Productions, "South Bronx," *Criminal Minded* (B-Boy Records, MKHAN 77, 1986).
[191] MC Shan, "The Bridge," 1988, *The Bridge/The Used To Do It Out In The Park* (Cold Chillin' CC3503, 1988).
[192] Butchy B, "Go Magic," 1988, Groovy Move (Groovy Move Productions, GM-0462, 1988).
[193] Butchy B, "Go Magic," 1988, Groovy Move (Groovy Move Productions, GM-0462, 1988).

recordings: "I'm Still #1" (1988), "My Philosophy" (1988), and "Blackman in Effect" (1990). In "Still Number 1," which was directed towards MC Shan, he rapped: "Your first mistake was to answer back / […] You're wack / Weak, soft and never really posed a threat."[194] Then in 1990, KRS-One clinched his victory by rapping: "I've got no juice, cause I'm not getting juice / To have juice means you kiss and lick a lot of booty / I don't preach hate, I simply get the record straight."[195] Though the "Bridge Wars" peaked between 1985 and 1990, the feud continued to make brief appearances across the work of each rapper until 2001.[196] In "The Bridge Is Over" KRS-One publicly chastised those he deemed effeminate in order to lay claim to the genesis of Rap, and secure his masculinity in much of the same way that anti-Disco protestors had done nearly ten years earlier.

Conclusion

By the mid-to-late 1980s, the masculinist shift in Rap music also reordered, re-shaped and narrowed the codes and performances of R&B music. In 1986, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, the former bandmates of Prince, gained notoriety as a producing team for creating the first identifiable sound and aesthetic bridge between Rap and R&B in Janet Jackson's solo album *Control.* The album capitalized on synthesized percussion, heavy doses of piano synthesizers, sound effects and limited harmonic movement.[197] By 1988, the Jam/Lewis sound, now under the nurturance of Harlem producer Teddy Riley, blended Rap rhythms, samples, and production techniques with the

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[194] KRS-One, "Still Number 1, the Numero Uno Mix," 1988, *Jack of Spades/I'm Still #1* (Jive, 1169-1-JD, 1988).
[195] KRS-One, "Blackman In Effect," 1990, *Edutainment* (Jive, 1394-4-J, 1990).
[196] The rivalry has been remembered fondly in the lyrics of Nasir "Nas" Jones and Tupac Amaru "2Pac" Shakur, and commodified when KRS-One and MC Shan appeared together in Sprite's 1996 "Obey Your Thirst" marketing campaign where the men exchanged impromptu battle rhymes in a boxing ring. For a visual reference to the "Obey Your Thirst" ad campaign, please see, "KRS-One, MC Shan, October.4.1996, Sprite Commercial," *YouTube*, 0:27, posted by egoggles, March 15, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w308G0Vcifk.
[197] Nelson George, *Buppies, B-Boys, Baps & Bohos: Notes on Post-Soul Black Culture* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), 27; Ripani, *The New Blue Music,* 131.

vocal sensibilities and harmonies of R&B. *Village Voice* journalist Barry Cooper re-labelled their invention the "New Jack Swing" sound.[198] Although the sonic landscape of New Jack Swing was initially shaped by a female R&B singer (Janet Jackson), it was primarily associated with male R&B acts such as New Edition, Bel Biv Devoe, Boyz II Men, Bobby Brown, Keith Sweat, and Guy. These men used the sensual lyrics familiar to the R&B tradition and paired them with verses that contained raps.[199] Their voices also differed – New Jack Swing singers combined R&B vocals that were pitched in a deeper tenor register and relied less on falsetto alongside relatively simplistic Rap verses. Practitioners matched these vocals with Rap's hyper-masculine "cool pose" posturing in their choreography, live performance and music video iconography. As in the case of Bel Biv DeVoe, Guy, and Bobby Brown, New Jack Swing artists were often depicted with uninviting expressions, body gestures that mimicked intercourse (pelvic thrusting and gyrating), and the fashion of the "urban landscape." These men wore gold chains, high top fade haircuts, baggy formal or athletic wear, unbuttoned shirts, baseball hats, and running shoes or fashion boots.[200]

The shift of R&B's gender performances towards Rap's masculinist aesthetic reflected the narrowing of black popular music landscape towards the hardened gender binary. Take, for

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[198] The term "New Jack Swing" was first coined by journalist Barry Michael Cooper in a 1987 *Village Voice* article on musician singer-songwriter and producer Teddy Riley who is credited with inventing the genre. The phrase "New Jack" was a colloquial term first used by Cold Crush Brothers rapper Grandmaster Caz and it was meant to refer to a newcomer or late starter at a particular place or sphere of activity. Cooper then added the term "swing" in order to draw a comparison between the music that was once played in the 1920s at speakeasies, and the music heard in 1980s crack-houses. For more on the history of the "New Jack City" term, see, Barry Michael Cooper, "Teddy Riley's New Jack Swing: Harlem Gangers Raise a Genius," *Village Voice*, October 18 1987; George, *Buppies, B-Boys, Baps & Bohos*, 31; Ripani, *The New Blue Music,* 131.

[199] Several rappers articulated their frustrations over New Jack Swing artists utilizing Rap lyricism as part of their material. Such was the case in Ice Cube's 1991 recording "The Wrong Nigga to Fuck Wit" where he rapped, "Cause 'the Nigga ya love to hate' still can kill at will / It ain't no pop cause that sucks / And you can New Jack Swing on my nuts," and A Tribe Called Quest's 1991 "Jazz (We've Got)" recording where rapper Phife Dawg rapped, "Strictly hardcore tracks, not a new jack swing." For the full lyrics, see, Ice Cube, "The Wrong Nigga to Fuck Wit," 1991, *Death Certificate* (Priority/EMI, CDL 57155, 1991), and A Tribe Called Quest, "Jazz (We've Got)," 1991, *The Low End Theory* (Jive, 1418-2-J, 1991).

[200] Bel Biv DeVoe, "Poison,"(music video) 1990, *Poison* (MCA Records, MCAD-6387, 1990); Guy, "Groove Me," (music video) 1988, *Guy* (MCA Records, MCA-22176, 1988); Bobby Brown, "Every Little Step," (music video) 1988, *Don't Be Cruel* (MCA Records, MCA-42185, 1988).

example, Bobby Brown's 1988 video for "Don't Be Cruel." In a scene reminiscent of Michael Jackson's "The Way You Make Me Feel," Bobby Brown pursued a young woman in a low-lit urban alleyway as he shifted between walking by her side and stepping in front of her in a domineering way. Unlike Jackson, Brown aggressively placed his hands on his love interest and pushed her in an attempt to convince her that he was the man for her. Jackson convinced his love interest of his affections by wooing her with lyrics such as, "you knock me off my feet / my lonely days are gone," and impressing her with his extensive dance vocabulary.[201] Brown's lyrics highlighted dissatisfaction, impatience, and an insistence on being treated with respect. Unlike Jackson's love pursuit, Brown's girlfriend was labelled an ungrateful "fool [with] a bad attitude" who played games and rejected and abused his affections. Like Rap, New Jack Swing lyrics exhibited a fractured set of gender relations. In New Jack Swing songs, relationships were often strained, and men were assertive and even domineering. Unlike the work of Jackson and Prince where women were valued for their emotional and psychological intelligence, New Jack Swing women tended to be cast as superficial, unappreciative and valued merely for their bodies. By the late 1980s, representations of gender identity in New Jack Swing suggested that the remasculinization of America had pervaded, informed, shifted and hardened black popular music gender-specific performances.

Rap's masculinist orientation and the act of asserting black (male) power by declaring power over women reflected transformations that were part of broader American culture and projects of power. Musicians in the genres of R&B and Rap were experimenting with existing tensions around and between the gender binary in order to respond to the critiques and anxieties of audiences and cultural gatekeepers. Black musicians were also using culture to construct, negotiate

[201] Michael Jackson, "The Way You Make Me Feel," (music video) 1987, *Bad* (Epic Records, EK 40600, 1987).

and re-build racial identity politics. Popular culture critics had been troubled by how a "questionable," ambivalent and supposedly unstable gender system provided performers with a relatively vast terrain of gender fluid identities. Black popular culture gender articulations in this decade were intimately tied to a discourse of authenticity that designated "real" blackness as hyper and hegemonic masculinity. Across the 1980s, black popular culture played a role in shaping gender and race ideologies and practices in ways that were fundamentally linked to larger projects of power intended to exclude, intimidate, dominate and exploit that which was deemed feminine and outside of heteronormativity.

In a decade of flux, this process of re-articulating and foregrounding masculinity through black popular culture resulted in a hardening of the gender binary and the perception that Rap was increasingly a politically useful cultural artefact. First, by decade's end, New Jack Swing performances indicated that the gender binary had re-hardened in order to empower hegemonic masculinity. The introduction of this genre suggested that masculine and feminine became more polarized and distinct. In the case of Rap, a hierarchy of power and privilege developed that made it possible to label genre practices and performances male-centric. That is, by the mid-to-late 1980s black popular music had become what Big Daddy Kane called a "big daddy thing."[202] And yet, these codes were not peculiar or limited to Rap. Rather, they were part of a more extensive dialogue on male dominance in American culture. This heterosexist structure, paternalism, and unequal power dynamic opened 'effeminate' performances up to ridicule. It also meant that female rappers experienced notable difficulties when acting as interlopers and interjecting in ways that did not conform to patriarchal expectations. For Black male practitioners, this meant that they were being positioned as *the* voice of the genre as well as their communities once Rap was positioned as a

[202] Big Daddy Kane, "It's A Big Daddy Thing," *It's A Big Daddy Thing* (Cold Chillin'/Reprise/Warner Bros. Records, 7599-25941-1, 1989).

politically useful cultural tool by the mid-to-late 1980s. In the following chapter, I explore elite debates over how Rap music could usefully serve commercial and government interests. The chapter also considers what happened when Black rappers used public and elite interest in their music to address and render visible questions and concerns about the impact of the *duppy state* on Black life chances.

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- CHAPTER THREE -
"Prophets of Rage": The Socio-Political Usages of Rap Music Storytelling in Late 1980s Moral Reform Campaigns

"I got a right to be hostile, man, my people are being persecuted! / With vice, I hold the mic device / With force, I keep it away of course / And I'm keeping you from sleeping / And on a stage I rage, and I'm rollin' / To the poor, I pour in on in metaphors / Not bluffing, it's nothing that we ain't did before / We played, you stayed / The points made you consider it […] / Clear the way for the prophets of rage."
– Chuck D of Public Enemy[1]

In 1985, We Care About New York, Inc., created the Break Against Graffiti (BAG) Coalition with the intention of cleaning up New York City public spaces. In a proclamation letter to New York City citizens following the creation of BAG, Mayor Edward L. Koch reported that graffiti vandalism had cost the Transit Authority approximately $42,000,000 annually in anti-vandalism enforcement and maintenance.[2] Claudia Barnett argues that the mayor and other city officials described graffiti as an act of "defacement" and intimidation, and symbol of anarchy and disorder in press and documentary interviews.[3] Two years earlier, Mayor Koch told documentarian Tony Silver that graffiti was,

> one of the quality-of-life offences. […] It's like three card monte, and pick-pocketing, shoplifting, and graffiti defacing our public and private walls. They're all in the same area of destroying our lifestyle and making it difficult to enjoy life, and I think it has to be responded to.[4]

Barnett maintains that Koch, like other members of New York City's old guard believed that graffiti was an example of how their way of life was being "written over."[5] Richard Ravitch,

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[1] Public Enemy, "Prophets of Rage," 1988, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (DefJam/Columbia Records, 527 358-1, 1988).
[2] Edward L. Koch, Proclamation Letter from Mayor, 1985. Box 2, Folder 13, Kurtis Blow – We Care About New York, Inc., Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[3] Claudia Barnett, "The Death of Graffiti: Postmodernism and the New York City Subway, *Studies in Popular Culture* 16 (2): 25, 28-29.
[4] *Style Wars*. Directed by Tony Silver, Public Art Productions/Plexifilm, 1983. *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9KxbaSU-Eo.
[5] Barnett, "The Death of Graffiti," 25, 28-29.

Chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, believed that graffiti was an example of a misdirected value system. He claimed,

> This society has left these kids with not enough to do. If the kids have energy and wanna do something, we'll give them all brooms, we'll give them all sponges, and they can do something that is publicly productive, useful, and that would earn for them respect and approbation from their fellow citizens. It isn't the energy that's misplaced, it's the value system that's misplaced.[6]

City officials were so threatened by graffiti and the act of carrying a spray paint can on the subway that they labelled it an offense – so much so that if damage exceeded $200 the graffiti writer could be charged with a felony.[7]

In an effort to deal with what many New Yorkers began to label a "graffiti menace," the Break Against Graffiti (BAG) Coalition tapped into art's power to influence the public. In a letter to the *New York Times* editor, Carolyn S. Konheim, a New York City environmental regulator focused on transportation, air quality and solid waste, argued that "the combination of tough, systematic enforcement at the Transit Authority and a comprehensive creative attack on attitudes is New York's best hope to rid itself of the graffiti menace."[8] BAG's response was just that: creative. In 1985, BAG strategically recruited leading mainstream rappers such as Kurtis Blow to participate in events such as "Break Against Graffiti Day" and "Rap Song/Break Dance contest."[9] This was not the first time that New York City elite used celebrities to combat the "graffiti menace." Two years earlier, Mayor Koch announced the "Make your mark in society, not on

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[6] *Style Wars*. Directed by Tony Silver, Public Art Productions/Plexifilm, 1983. *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9KxbaSU-Eo.
[7] Barnett, "The Death of Graffiti," 29.
[8] Carolyn S. Konheim, "Letter To the Editor: On Subways; The Graffiti Battle Is Being Fought," *New York Times* (online edition), June 27, 1985, http://www.nytimes.com/1985/06/27/opinion/l-letter-on-subways-the-graffiti-battle-is-being-fought-081540.html (accessed November 27, 2015).
[9] We Care About New York, Inc., Press Release from We Care About New York, Inc. from Mayor Koch titled "Mayor Koch 'Raps Up' Graffiti Problem," April 23 1985, Box 2, Folder 13, Kurtis Blow – We Care About New York, Inc., Adler Hip Hop Archive; Konheim, "Letter To the Editor: On Subways; The Graffiti Battle Is Being Fought."

society" campaign featuring boxers Hector Comacho and Alex Ramos.[10] Like the Comacho and Ramos campaign, BAG tapped into celebrity star power to hold their citywide finals on April 27, 1985. Two hundred students attended the seven-hour performance set where young people could win $8,000 in prizes and a chance to perform at an upcoming event before corporate sponsor McDonald's. Mayor Koch praised all coalition members for their efforts in the "battle against graffiti vandalism."[11] Days following BAG's citywide finals, We Care About New York Inc. launched Don't Break New York, a city-wide initiative that allowed "those artists and performers who have come from the NYC streets" to help the homeless.[12] At the May 2nd event organizers showcased all the elements of Hip Hop culture: rapping, scratching (deejaying), breakdancing, and graffiti art, which was contained, directed and vilified only days beforehand in the work of the BAG coalition.[13]

What follows is an analysis of how the social elite mobilized Rap music in a series of moral reform campaigns to address several national "social ills." In the early 1980s, public discourses regarding urban criminal activity, gang violence, drug use, vandalism, and teen pregnancy, reflected a growing anxiety over the welfare of the nation's youth and the safety of American cities.

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[10] *Style Wars*. Directed by Tony Silver, Public Art Productions/Plexifilm, 1983. *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9KxbaSU-Eo.

[11] We Care About New York, Inc., Press Release from We Care About New York, Inc. from Mayor Koch titled "Mayor Koch 'Raps Up' Graffiti Problem," April 23 1985, Box 2, Folder 13, Kurtis Blow – We Care About New York, Inc., Adler Hip Hop Archive; Konheim, "Letter To the Editor: On Subways; The Graffiti Battle Is Being Fought."

[12] We Care About New York Inc. reported that all the proceeds from Don't Break New York would go into a special tax-free account administered by the Coalition for the Homeless to be distributed equally among three projects: The Jericho Project (which trained and employed the homeless to renovate housing where other homeless NYC residents would live), Women In Need (an emergency shelter for homeless women and their children), and Camp Homeward Bound (a summer program for children of homeless families). The definitions of these organizations were listed in, We Care About New York, Inc., Press Release titled "Don't Break New York: The Roxy, May 2, 1985," May 2, 1985. Box 2, Folder 13, Kurtis Blow – We Care About New York, Inc., Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[13] We Care About New York, Inc., Press Release titled "Don't Break New York: The Roxy, May 2, 1985," May 2, 1985. Box 2, Folder 13, Kurtis Blow – We Care About New York, Inc., Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

As Rap's mainstream presence deepened, so too did elite concerns over how they could use the genre to serve local, state, federal and commercial priorities. These elites increasingly framed Rap as a distinct language that could communicate with American youth – particularly racialized constituencies. In 1985, elites began establishing working partnerships with a select number of rappers in a series of moral reform campaigns. These elites included members of the state and arms of the state at the local, state and federal levels such as politicians and their families, social welfare organizations and the board of education and its employees. These elites also included the not-for-profit sector, particularly those organizations focused on charity and social justice, and members of corporate America. These organizations included banks, advertising agencies, sport and music companies, and food, beverage and clothing companies. These elites believed that they could use Rap to correct the behaviours of America's supposedly maladjusted racialized youth. They imagined Rap as a distinct language of the dispossessed that could communicate with segments of American society that were, at least as they saw it, illiterate in and/or resistant to the 'common' language, values, and mores of mainstream America. These social elite intended to utilize the more "palatable" components of Rap music as a tactic of persuasion as well as to appear cutting edge and tolerant.

This chapter argues that as rappers were creating working partnerships with members of the social elite, public dialogue regarding Rap music's usefulness shifted following a number of criminal acts at Rap concerts. Through a close reading of public discourse and private exchanges (letters, faxes and public relations communications), this chapter demonstrates that between 1985 and 1990, the public's perception and reception of Rap music underwent a noted change. The genre was imagined as constructive, instructive and valuable by people of influence. By the mid-to-late 1980s, incidences of concert violence began to exacerbate the already existing association between

urban space and its inhabitants as 'criminal.' These events led some elites and the broader public to treat Rap with suspicion, caution and fear. Elites and the public were also prompted to react in this manner following a series of public controversies over Rap's mainstream profile and its critique of white supremacy which alerted them to the genre's ability to call America's complex apparatuses of power and privilege into question. As public discourse reshaped urban spaces, urban inhabitants and urban expressions around new icons of supposed negativity – namely Rap music – several rappers struggled to maintain a positive public reputation and their working partnerships with the social elite began to deteriorate in noted, subtle and dramatic ways.

During the course of these moral reform campaigns, rappers, their supporters (varied as they were) and people of influence were engaged in a complex encounter with the discourses of dispossession. By appropriating and deploying the work of rappers in moral reform campaigns, social elites produced powerful narratives about urban space and its inhabitants. These social elites also strengthened the public perception that they were concerned with the welfare of America's working and workless poor and committed to designing rehabilitative pathways with a social justice impulse. Instead, as social elites developed moral reform campaigns, they also mobilized paranoia about America's unraveling moral fabric and the danger of cities. In doing so, they bolstered the perception of the 'criminal' American city; they pronounced their intention to correct a set of perceived urban pathologies; and they built consensus around state projects such as rolling back the social safety net, the Wars on Crime and Drugs, and bolstering surveillance and correctional control of poor and racialized communities. As a cadre of rappers lent their skills to these moral reform campaigns, they used these working relationships to increase Rap's visibility and profitability, engage the discourses of dispossession, and convey the contours of their lives to undercut and undermine the messages that they were recruited to deliver.

This chapter will begin by setting the larger national context – the ramping up of the carceral state – and the legislative practices and public discourses that shaped and informed the public and political usefulness of Rap storytelling. This chapter will proceed to detail Rap's storytelling priorities, and the perception among segments of the public that Rap was a perfect ally to execute a variety of moral reform imperatives designed to support initiatives for the War on Crime, the War on Drugs, and the social, political, economic and cultural support for mass incarceration. These public campaigns included initiatives to curb the destruction of public property, public anxieties over crack use, gang violence, and teen pregnancy. Finally, this chapter will demonstrate how rappers used their broadening public platform to engage the discourses of dispossession. These phenomena took the form of public critiques of urban violence and state-funded education, a boycott of the popular culture award and accolade system, and the articulation of pro-Black sentiments and critiques of white supremacy and its logic.

Discourses of Criminality: Moral Reform Campaigns in the Era of Mass Incarceration

Scholars argue that the disproportionate confinement of Black bodies in the era of mass incarceration extended beyond the late twentieth century and was rooted in enslavement and post-Civil War developments. Khalil Gibran Muhammad argues that across the twentieth century, the discourse on race and crime shifted from a racial-biological to a racial-cultural frame. And yet, constructions of Black criminality remained rooted in the notion of black inferiority and black pathology which rationalized the enslavement of Black bodies.[14] Eric Foner maintains that in the aftermath of enslavement, these notions of Black criminality continued and intensified with the supposed 'birth' of Black freedom. Foner suggests that while southerners introduced the Black

[14] Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4, 9.

Codes, and these regulations extended some rights to the formerly enslaved – such as the right to marry or possibly own property – these laws were primarily intended to regulate the lives and labour of African Americans.[15] Talitha L. LeFlouria maintains that in the post-emancipation period, the state-sponsored Black Codes and vagrancy laws (which strengthened systems such as debt peonage) became tools of white supremacy insofar as they were strategically enforced throughout the south to undermine the social, economic, and political mobility of poor, landless, unemployed and underemployed African Americans. These laws were used to target Black people – particularly those framed as "shiftless," "vagabonds," gamblers, and "loafers." They also enabled authorities to charge African Americans with misdemeanor offenses and ensure that they were put to work as part of chain gangs or in the service of southern planters.[16] LeFlouria contends that vagrancy laws and the introduction of the 13th Amendment – which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States except as punishment for a crime – allowed for the disproportionate arrest and incarceration of Black men, women, and youth. This constitutional loophole permitted the white southern elite to restore their authority and capitalize upon a growing pool of long-term felony offenders whose labour could be used in newly formed prison industries to revive the south's post-Civil War economy.[17] Matthew J. Mancini argues that by the late nineteenth century, southerners also institutionalized the convict leasing system – a method of criminal punishment where persons convicted of criminal offenses were contracted out to private entrepreneurs (people in business, planters, and developing corporations) to work in harsh

[15] Eric Foner argues that the Black Codes placed restrictions on the ability of African Americans to serve on juries or in state militias or to vote. The Codes also declared that if an African American labourer failed to sign their yearly labour contract, they could be arrested and hired out to white landowners. For more information on the Black Codes, see, Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History Brief*, 5th edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 455-456.
[16] Talitha L. LeFlouria, "'Under the Sting of the Lash': Gendered Violence, Terror, and Resistance in the South's Convict Camps," *The Journal of African American History* 100:3 (Summer 2015): 368.
[17] LeFlouria, "'Under the Sting of the Lash,'" 369.

conditions as part of exploitative labour contracts.[18] LeFlouria contends that in the post-Civil War carceral regime, African Americans were overworked, managed (in terms of their living conditions, diet, and medical care), subjected to fiendish acts of physical and often sexualized cruelty, and exploited in ways that looked eerily like enslavement.[19] Heather Ann Thompson suggests that African Americans were continually framed as 'criminal' through census data and discourse well into the Progressive Era and during the New Deal. These strategies were used to exclude African Americans from American largesse.[20]

In the Civil Rights era and its immediate aftermath, the expansion of the carceral state signaled the persistence of the punitive *duppy state* in the lives of African Americans – particularly those who inhabited American cities. Elizabeth Hinton and Heather Ann Thompson argue that during the Civil Rights Movement, the carceral state continued to expand even as the nation was supposedly moving closer to a progressive vision of egalitarianism. They suggest that the growth of the carceral state in this period should be read as a response to the broad gains brought about by Black people's demands for freedom and citizenship through the Voting Rights Act in 1965.[21] In this period, the power of the *duppy state* to reshape and reupholster itself in a seemingly 'new' image resulted in legislation that barred those with criminal records from the ballot and ultimately disenfranchised those cast as criminal. Thompson maintains that in the era of mass incarceration,

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[18] Persons hired to work within the convict leasing system often labored in conditions that looked eerily like enslavement – as in the case of labour on sugar and cotton plantations. Convicts were also sent to work on railroads, roadways, and in ditches, forested areas, coal mines, turpentine farms, phosphate beds, brickyards, sawmills, camp kitchens, laundering services, and as private servants among other entrepreneurial forms of labour. For more information on convict leasing, see, Matthew J. Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 1-2; Talitha L. LeFlouria, "'Under the Sting of the Lash': Gendered Violence, Terror, and Resistance in the South's Convict Camps," *The Journal of African American History* 100:3 (Summer 2015), 368-369.
[19] LeFlouria, "'Under the Sting of the Lash,'" 369.
[20] Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *The Journal of American History* 97:3 (December 2010), 707.
[21] Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2016), 11, 14; Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 704.

despite discourses of colourblindness and racial progress, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (one of the most noteworthy victories of the Civil Rights Movement) was significantly undercut and undermined in ways that continued to unravel African American political progress.[22]

The commonplace narrative of the "law and order" era of American history imprecisely presents its origins in changes brought about by 1960s conservatives and Republican political discourse. This narrative insists that beginning with the 1964 presidential campaign, conservatives used shrewd electoral strategies such as coding anxieties over race and class as "law and order" concerns to initiate changes in federal law enforcement. Hinton argues that these political strategies were responses to the various social movements of the 1960s (Civil Rights, Women's Rights, Gay Liberation, and the Student and Anti-War Movements) and the political, economic, social and cultural uncertainties of the 1970s.[23] Thompson maintains that the rise of mass incarceration was far more involved in that it can be traced to post-WWII liberals and Democrats losing significant ideological and policy ground to the Right who were able to capture the imagination of the American people. They did so by using 'tough on crime' language to tackle the perception among the white working and middle-classes of rising street crime rates and the 'chaos' across American cities following a number of urban riots in the mid-to-late 1960s. As indicated in chapter two, post-WWII liberals were also facing a growing loss of faith in the voting process among the American working and middle class.[24] And yet, while conservatives were credited with the punitive turn in domestic criminal justice, the national crime control programs of the late twentieth century were rooted in bipartisan efforts.

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[22] Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 732-733.
[23] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 7.
[24] Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 726.

Scholars of the carceral state argue that the 'tough on crime' strategies of the post-WWII era stemmed from a progressive era in American liberalism and were largely co-created. Hinton maintains that beginning with the Kennedy administration, the state targeted low-income urban dwellers through its anti-delinquency programming. Once this program was reframed as the "War on Poverty" under President Johnson, the state expanded the aggressive and exhaustive supervision of black urban areas and the youth who lived there. Hinton maintains that while both administrations introduced programming that set the stage for the expansion of the punitive carceral state, the Democrats' criminalization of black urban populations was nonetheless accompanied by social welfare programming in the form of counseling, job training, and remedial education (among other social welfare strategies to prevent youth crime). And yet, these methods could also be read as another means of containment.[25] Hinton argues that in the 1960s, the federal government simultaneously introduced anti-crime legislation with a comprehensive anti-poverty program in low-income urban communities. This strategy tilted the federal response to the post-industrial urban crisis and violence from a social welfare strategy to a punishment scheme. The transformation paradoxically paved the way for the growth of the carceral state, urban patrol forces, punitive racially biased sentencing laws, and the expansion of 'new' and already existing penal institutions.[26] Hinton contends that while post-WWII advocates of progressive liberalism attempted to usher forth anti-crime initiatives with the social welfare minded intention of improving American society, the bipartisan investment in anti-crime and shared notions of race and crime gave rise to the merger of social welfare and law enforcement as a method of social

[25] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 3-4.
[26] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, 4, 8, 14-17.

control and engineering.[27] Hinton maintains that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations understood crime as a cause rather than an effect of urban decay, social inequality, and poverty.[28]

Scholars suggest that by the late 1960s, the expansion of the carceral state depended upon the "criminalization of urban space." Hinton maintains that by 1968, following 250 separate reported incidents of rioting in American cities, the threat of urban rebellion – which was often discursively mapped as 'Black' – played a dominant role in ramping up mass incarceration.[29] Hinton argues that policymakers and lawmakers became increasingly preoccupied with controlling urban civil disorder which was labelled a symptom of poverty and a "root" of crime.[30] Beginning with the Nixon administration, and later the Ford and Carter administrations, policymakers mobilized theoretical data and social scientific approaches to strengthen discourses about the supposedly inherent criminality of youth populations and low-income racialized urban neighbourhoods. This data was used to 1) surveil, arrest and incarcerate young African American men at disproportionate levels; 2) produce associations between Black urban and suburban neighbourhoods and criminality; and 3) roll out statistical apparatuses to measure the nature of street crime in American cities. Hinton contends that the statistical data mobilized throughout the 1960s and 1970s to diagnose the nature of crime in the United States was problematically flawed. Not only did the data overstate the problem of crime in Black communities urban and otherwise, but it distorted the broader picture of American crime in that the data excluded organized and white-collar crime. These crime statistics overrepresented street-level crime and only captured crimes committed by low income and unemployed Americans. These data produced the outcome

[27] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 8, 21-22.
[28] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 279.
[29] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 1, 11, 14.
[30] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 21-22.

of Black over-incarceration and fed discourses of Black criminality and the urban (a euphemism for 'Black') as criminal.[31]

Across the late 1960s and 1970s, the criminalization of urban blackness in the national imaginary was also informed by debates that linked together anxieties over Black freedom and the welfare state. Julilly Kohler-Hausmann argues that discussions over welfare and the penal system often unfolded alongside one another given that public discourses often attributed welfare and crime as problems emanating from the same place: low income African American and Latinx urban communities.[32] Hinton maintains that even while there were instances where the legislative language of criminal justice did not explicitly evoke race, federal policymakers across political and ideological lines shared a set of assumptions about African Americans, poverty, and crime. Policymakers contended that these social circumstances were the supposed product of individual and cultural "deficiencies" and pathologies and that these narratives were rooted in seemingly neutral statistical and sociological "truths" of black criminality.[33] Thompson maintains that this process resulted in the increased regulation of racialized urban dwellers and their subjection to unprecedented time in prison.[34] Thompson contends that higher levels of surveillance and incarceration in urban spaces inevitably led to decreased social and economic stability and exacerbated an already heightened state of urban crisis.[35] Hinton suggests that by the late 1960s, the Nixon administration seized upon the punitive impulses of Johnson's domestic anti-crime policies, while simultaneously disinvesting in social welfare programming and introducing draconian sentencing reforms in their place.[36] Under the Carter administration, the punitive policies

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[31] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 22, 24.
[32] Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, "Guns and Butter: The Welfare State, the Carceral State, and the Politics of Exclusion in Postwar United States," *The Journal of American History* 102:1 (June 2015), 87-89.
[33] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 2-4.
[34] Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 705-706.
[35] Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 713, 716.
[36] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime, 2-4.*

related to urban spaces that developed under Nixon were then framed as local and national security precautions rather than crime control measures.[37]

By Reagan's presidency, the War on Crime and Drugs disproportionately impacted poor and racialized urban Americans in a way that centralized federal law enforcement, extended the scope of surveillance, and expanded the American prison population.[38] With the legislative transition from the War on Crime to the War on Drugs, federal spending was channeled into the militarization of domestic policing and developing strategies to eradicate youth gangs and the sale and use of drugs. Michelle Alexander contends that funding for criminal justice institutions under the War on Crime and Drugs ballooned. Between 1980 and 1984 the FBI's anti-drug law enforcement increased from $8 million to $95 million, and between 1981 and 1991 the Department of Defense's anti-drug allocations increased from $33 million to $1,042 million. During that ten year period the DEA's anti-drug spending grew from $86 to $1,026 million, while funding for drug treatment agencies, prevention, and education on the other hand, dramatically reduced.[39] Donna Murch maintains that these changes in funding and legislative strategy occurred alongside the expansion of the prison industrial complex, its associated institutions (courts and parole), and the enforcement of mandatory minimum sentencing particularly following the decision to make drug charges a federal issue.[40] Thompson contends that in the 1980s alone, these changes resulted in a jump in drug charges from 26.9 percent to 46 percent, an increase of more than 50 percent in terms of the chance of receiving a prison sentence, and the increase of the average prison sentence by nearly 40

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[37] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime, 2-4.*
[38] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 4.
[39] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010), 14-17, 49-50, 82-83.
[40] Donna Murch, "Crack in Los Angeles: Crisis, Militarization, and Black Response to the Late Twentieth-Century War on Drugs," *Journal of American History*, 102:1 (June 2015), 162-166.

percent.[41] Alexander suggests that these initiatives, which disproportionately targeted poor racialized youth, had racial dimensions but were nearly impossible to expose given their coding within the rhetoric of "law and order."[42]

In the latter twentieth century, and particularly under the Republican administrations of Nixon and Reagan, discourses of 'criminal' blackness were mobilized to fuel racial paranoia and manage anxieties over Black freedom. Thompson argues that public anxieties about social disorder intersected with a growing discomfort over African Americans' civil rights disturbances and demands to achieve meaningful social and economic equality and inclusion. These anxieties, which were often mediated and transformed into discourse through text and television journalism, fueled racial paranoia, increased the national and state-level desire for "the preservation of law and order," and amplified nation-wide fears about real and potential threats to social safety despite evidence that crime rates had decreased.[43] Alexander suggests that particular tropes of blackness as criminal *and* victim were produced during the War on Drugs. On the one hand, media discourses capitalized upon the images of pathologized "crack whores" and "crack dealers" to produce disdain. On the other hand, the images of the "crack baby" and "Black on Black crime" (where both perpetrator and victim were Black) were used to generate empathy and concern. Alexander maintains that this discursive strategy of Black criminality and vulnerability manifested into a panic over drugs that engendered the mobilization of anti-drug war sentiment across the racial divide as well as support for public health, prevention, and protection campaigns.[44]

The nationwide discourses on the War on Drugs and the criminalization of blackness and urban space led many within Black communities to support moral reform campaigns intended to

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[41] Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 709.
[42] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* 79-83, 88-89.
[43] Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 728-729.
[44] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* 84-87; Murch, "Crack in Los Angeles," 168-171.

deal with War on Drugs concerns. Hinton suggests that during the Nixon and Reagan administrations, policymakers circulated discourses that collapsed blackness, the urban, poverty and criminality together in order to influence the opinions and actions of low-income urban communities.[45] Muhammad maintains that these discourses of Black criminality continued to be among the most widely accepted bases for justifying prejudicial and discriminatory bias and treatment, and racially motivated violence carried as an instrument of public safety even within Black communities.[46] Donna Murch argues that the panic over drug use in the 1980s – particularly crack cocaine – broadened the support of War on Drugs campaigns across various constituencies. In the case of African Americans, anxieties over drug use and criminality reflected the fractured nature of racialized communities. That is, nationwide discourses of criminality produced the desire among African Americans to protect youth from the devastation of crack, as well as the structural inequality, deindustrialization, outsourcing, and capital flight that had produced the fertile ground for crack's widespread usage. These sentiments produced initial support among some African Americans for the War on Drugs, as well as accompanying public health strategies and campaigns like those discussed throughout this chapter. The responses among African Americans to the War on Drugs exacerbated existing internal fractures in Black communities along the lines of age, class, and faith. Murch maintains that these divisions provide historians with insight into Black class and generational polarities and antagonisms of the period.[47]

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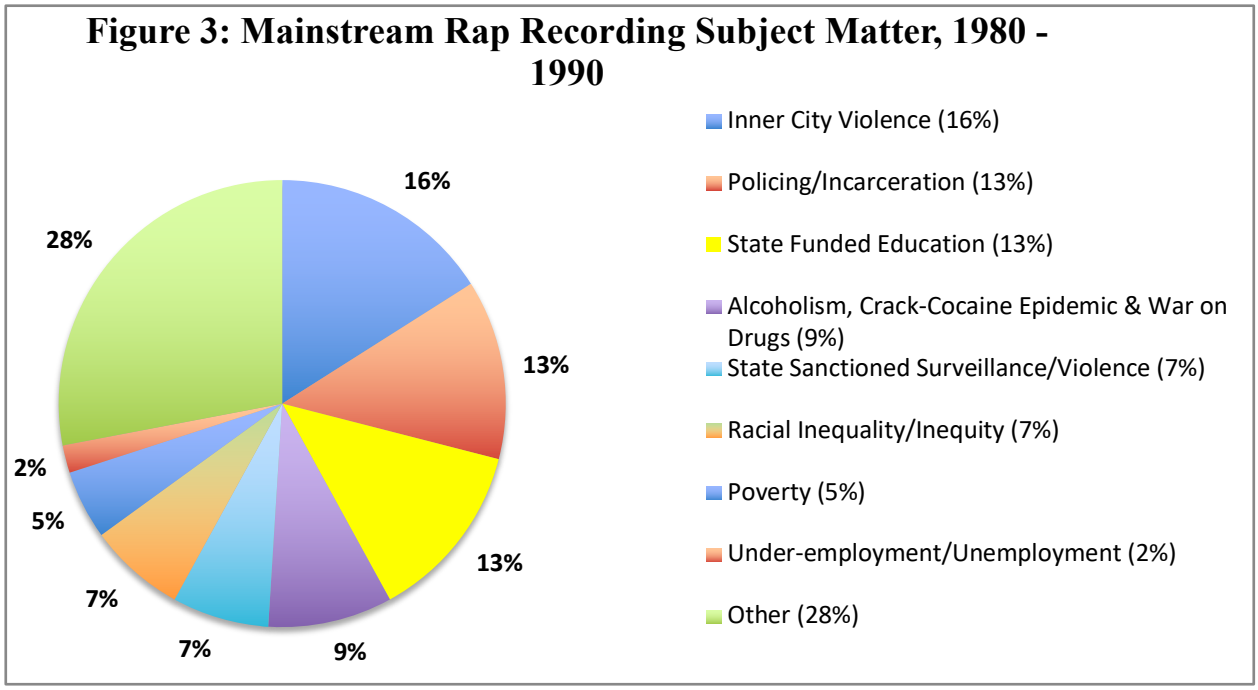
[45] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 9.
[46] Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 4, 9.
[47] Murch, "Crack in Los Angeles," 168-170.



Source: Dissertation Database. Organized and collected by Francesca D'Amico-Cuthbert, November and December 2012.

Historians can also examine 1980s Rap recordings to gain insight into how the Hip Hop generation was imagining and experiencing the urban crisis, War on Drugs and the punitive turn in criminal justice. According to the sample reviewed for this dissertation, approximately 72% of Rap recordings between 1980 and 1990 featured material with a focus on the urban crisis and the surveillance and criminalization of the urban. Many of these subjects would make up the moral reform discourses of the decade that circulated in and beyond African American communities.[48] These recordings stressed the relationship between racialized communities, the spaces they inhabited (which were often read and represented as "the urban"), and the modes and outcomes of the social (dis)organization of the period. Figure 3 captures the preoccupation among rappers in their lyricism over social phenomena such as: joblessness and urban poverty; violence (gang and otherwise) in urban spaces; policing, surveillance, and police brutality; the prison industrial

[48] See Figure 3.

complex and mass incarceration; state-funded education and the school-to-prison pipeline; alcoholism, crack cocaine and the Wars on Crime and Drugs.[49] Much of this subject matter would inspire rappers' involvement in a series of 1980s moral reform campaigns as well as outside interest in Rap music's usefulness as socially conscious minded music.

"Two Different Worlds": Rap Storytelling in Moral Reform Campaigns

By late 1985, the moral panic over crack cocaine in New York City led authorities and elites to develop "Don't Crack—Not Even Once!" – an anti-crack moral reform campaign intended to eradicate drug abuse which was organized by the Office of the Mayor and the Board of Education.[50] The two-hour rally, which was sponsored by Madison Square Garden Corporation (a Gulf + Western company) and the *New York Post,* was attended by more than 4,000 New York City high school students, elected officials, sports personalities, and entertainers. At the event Mayor Koch stated that "drug abuse [was] the greatest threat to our Nation's youth, and together, we will face it and defeat it."[51] Student governments across the city selected junior and senior level high school students attendees, peer leadership organizations, and athletic clubs to attend the rally and become involved in the anti-crack school campaigns. Students were given t-shirts, and headbands inscribed with the words "Don't Crack." For those students unable to attend, MTV arranged a special music video feed into the Felt Forum (inside of Madison Square Garden).[52] The event was also attended

[49] For more detailed information, see Note on Sources (located immediately following the epilogue).
[50] Press Release: Madison Square Garden, "Don't Crack – Not Even Once," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[51] Press Release: Madison Square Garden, "Don't Crack – Not Even Once!: Mayor Koch, Board of Education, Athletes & Celebrities In Anti-Drug Rally at Madison Square Garden's Felt Forum," Sept 30, 1985. Box 11, Folder 18, Run-DMC '85, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[52] The Felt Forum was a 5,000 seat auditorium that was beneath the main arena at Madison Square Garden in New York City (located in the 33rd Street and 7th Avenue complex). For more information on the venue, see, Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). For more details on the event, see, Press Release: Madison Square Garden, "Don't Crack – Not Even Once," Adler Hip Hop Archive.

by the VP and GM of the New York Rangers Phil Esposito and team members John Vanbiesbrouck, Ron Greschner and Tom Laidlaw; former NY Knickerbocker basketball player Earl Monroe; boxers Renaldo Snipes and Michael Olajide; wrestler Bruno Sammartino; and rappers Run-DMC. Teens chanted and cheered for over an hour and a half as speakers warned them of the dangers of crack.[53] Once Run-DMC joined the stage show they prompted the high school student attendees with the question: "Y'all gonna do drugs?" To which the crowd yelled, "NO!" Run-DMC followed up that question with "Y'all gonna go to school?" The students screamed in ear-splitting unison, "YES!"[54]

Less than a year later, rappers were asked to join yet another moral reform campaign regarding gang-related violence in an effort to address youth violence and Rap's public reputation. Following a Run DMC concert in Pittsburgh on June 28, 1986, twenty-two people were treated for injuries and approximately twenty-five people were arrested (including nine juveniles). The *Pittsburgh Press* reported that gang activity was an ordinary disruption at Rap concerts and that there was a growing public perception that the genre was threatening due to associated concert violence. Independent of the violence at their event, Run-DMC grew troubled by the perception that Rap music was violent. They decided to partake in public discussions about breaking the cycle of urban gang violence.[55] The *Pittsburgh Press* later reported that Leon Watkins (regional director of South Central Los Angeles' Community Youth Gang Services) approached Run-DMC to

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[53] Press Release: Madison Square Garden, "Don't Crack – Not Even Once," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[54] "Anti-Drug Rally Jams Madison Square Garden," October 8, 1985, *Malone NY Telegram*. Box 11, Folder 18, Run-DMC '85, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[55] Pittsburgh Press, "Rapping Violence: Run-DMC Calls for Day of Peace in LA," October 9, 1988. Box, 12, Folder 7, KDAY, L.A. Day of Peace '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library; Mike Cooper, "Run-DMC Credited With Helping Arrange L.A Street Gang Ceasefire," from Terry Marshall's *Daily Insider: Entertainment News for Radio,* November 5, 1986. Box, 12, Folder 7, KDAY, L.A. Day of Peace '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

participate in a two-hour talk session on LA's local radio station KDAY as part of a 24 hour "Day of Peace" ceasefire among 300 Los Angeles street gangs.[56]

Organizers of the 24 hour "Day of Peace" agreed that rappers were necessary intercessors because they knew how to effectively reach those who were involved in gang violence. The *Pittsburgh Press* reported that the weekend prior to Run-DMC's "Day of Peace," there were twelve gang killings and nine gang-related injuries.[57] Like the organizers of three well-known campaigns (Break Against Graffiti Coalition, Don't Break New York, and Don't Crack—Not Even Once!), Watkins argued that rappers were ideal intermediaries because Rap was a powerful communications tool that reached the youth. He maintained that Run-DMC, the most famous rap group in America, was "the best anti-drug and anti-gang spokesmen to young people not only in LA but in the country. Kids listen to them."[58] Watkins argued that Run-DMC had the power to encourage youth to make positive decisions and change the course of their lives.[59]

While rappers worked on these campaigns they recognized the political usefulness of their art and the power of persuasion that they had over their young fans. On the day of Watkins' ceasefire, Joseph "Run" Simmons of Run-DMC told the press that the band felt that they were responsible for the kids who made up their fan base. Simmons said that he believed that the youth, "[would] listen to [them] before the[y] listen[ed] to their teachers or their parents, because [they] are cooler."[60] Steve Vivaldia (director of the Los Angeles County Community Gang Services)

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[56] Though the term 'ceasefire' is an odd reference to a city that was not enmeshed in war (given the term's reference to the temporary suspension of fighting and introduction of peace talks during the war), it was not entirely misused given the unprecedented militarization of Los Angeles and its war-like measures against civilians. Greater attention will be given to the nature of post-industrial Los Angeles, policing and militarization in the next chapter; Mike Cooper, "Run-DMC Credited With Helping Arrange L.A Street Gang Ceasefire," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[57] Pittsburgh Press, "Rapping Violence: Run-DMC Calls for Day of Peace in LA," Adler Hip Hop Archive; Mike Cooper, "Run-DMC Credited With Helping Arrange L.A Street Gang Ceasefire," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[58] Mike Cooper, "Run-DMC Credited With Helping Arrange L.A Street Gang Ceasefire," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[59] Mike Cooper, "Run-DMC Credited With Helping Arrange L.A Street Gang Ceasefire," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[60] Pittsburgh Press, "Rapping Violence: Run-DMC Calls for Day of Peace in LA," Adler Hip Hop Archive.

agreed that rappers were relatable when he told the *Daily Insider*, "there are a number of young people who are totally dissociated with parents, teachers and older role models," and Rap has become "the gospel" for teenagers.[61] Mike Cooper of the *Daily Insider* attributed the lack of gang-related violence during the 24 hours "Day of Peace" ceasefire to Run-DMC's intervention and collaboration with gang services. Following the event, two unnamed gang leaders worked with Watkins as a mediator to hold summit talks for a permanent truce, and nearly 200 gang members and their families requested counselling services. According to phone company officials, the calls made to the 24 hours "Day of Peace" ceasefire event on KDAY with Run-DMC came in at a rate of 15,000 in the span of five minutes.[62]

Rap artists were also involved in campaigns that addressed teenage pregnancy and the growing concern over increasing welfare dependency among young racialized women. In a letter from the City of New York Office of the Mayor to Kevin W. Allen (Vice President of Ketchum Advertising), Deputy Coordinator Erlin Ibreck argued that by the mid-1980s 14,431 of the 35,042 New York City teenage pregnancies were among women 10 to 17 years old.[63] Ibreck's letter highlighted a growing concern among policymakers, service providers, and educators that teenagers imagined parenthood as an exciting alternative to an otherwise dismal future. He also indicated that young women aspired to motherhood and dropping out of high school. Ibreck claimed that this pro-pregnancy attitude would result in poor economic and intellectual achievement, an inability to contribute to the labour force, an increase in welfare rolls, and a higher chance of low birth weight. Ibreck maintained that this pro-pregnancy attitude would continue the

[61] Pittsburgh Press, "Rapping Violence: Run-DMC Calls for Day of Peace in LA," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[62] Mike Cooper, "Run-DMC Credited With Helping Arrange L.A Street Gang Ceasefire," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[63] Letter from the City of New York Office of the Mayor to Kevin W. Allen (Vice President Ketchum Advertising) regarding Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services, signed by Erlin Ibreck (Deputy Coordinator), April 9, 1986. Box 6, Folder 46, LL Cool J '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

cycle of poverty that these young women were likely already a part.[64] In partnership with NYC educators, the mayor's office reached out to rapper LL Cool J to help create public service announcement (PSA) booklets for the Smart About Sex (SAS) campaign which included a full range of family planning services and information about teen pregnancy networks in each of the city's racialized boroughs.[65]

Campaign organizers rationalized that they could use Rap lyrics as a tool of persuasion to curb teen pregnancy and convince teenagers to shift their attitudes and behaviours regarding sex. According to Ketchum Advertising's Vice President Kevin W. Allen, the minds behind the SAS campaign knew that in order to get through to their core audience of "youth at risk of teenage pregnancy," they would need to "speak from their (teens) language to promote the [city's] available, yet underused services."[66] The SAS campaign was a collaborative effort between city government, city-wide educators, the pro-bono assistance of Ketchum Advertising, and LL Cool J and his management. Directed by Alice Radosh, coordinator of New York City's office of adolescent pregnancy and parenting services, the campaign consisted of six black-and-white posters, television and radio PSAs. As in the case of earlier moral reform efforts by BAG regarding vandalism, crack-cocaine use, and gang violence, SAS organizers believed that rapper LL Cool J (short for Ladies Love Cool James) could get through to these young teenagers. In the mid-1980s LL Cool J was represented as a sexualized male persona and was reputed for his ability to write

[64] Letter from the City of New York Office of the Mayor to Kevin W. Allen (Vice President Ketchum Advertising) regarding Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092 Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[65] Letter from the City of New York Office of the Mayor to Kevin W. Allen (Vice President Ketchum Advertising) regarding Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[66] Issues and Action Update, Article titled "New York City Tells Teens: Be Smart About Sex," Fall 1986. Box 6, Folder 46, LL Cool J '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Rap songs that appealed to young women.[67] Rather than choosing a 'strong' female persona to mentor young women, the SAS team chose a hyper-sexualized male celebrity to instruct young women and men on sex and how to use and protect their bodies. This campaign was focused primarily on prevention as it related to pregnancy rather than AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections and diseases. Ibreck maintained that the campaign would speak to young New Yorkers in a language that they understood so that they would be better able to make informed and intelligent choices as they grew into adulthood.[68]

Like many other campaigns, SAS's materials appeared to target primarily poor and non-white youth living in the boroughs of New York City and consumers of supposedly "lowbrow" culture. In the postering campaign, SAS organizers enlisted fashion photographer Francesco Scavullo to photograph teens who looked visibly white, Latinx and African American. They hoped to include teens who supposedly looked like those the campaign intended to target and who were most affected by teen pregnancy scares.[69] SAS bus cards and posters featured teens delivering phrases illustrative of the "real-life" peer pressure about sex or the common misconceptions perpetuated by peers. The lines included: "Man… haven't you done it yet?" and "Birth control, my sister says you don't need it."[70] The visual materials instructed teens to call the city's free, confidential health line where trained operators would answer questions and make referrals to area health and family-planning clinics.[71] At the bottom of each bus card and poster was the statement:

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[67] "Trust Me. I Won't Get You Pregnant," *Sexuality Today: The Professionals Newsletter on Human Sexuality*, 9:48, 6-7.
[68] Issues and Action Update, Article titled "New York City Tells Teens: Be Smart About Sex," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[69] Issues and Action Update, Article titled "New York City Tells Teens: Be Smart About Sex," Fall 1986. Box 6, Folder 46, LL Cool J '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[70] Issues and Action Update, Article titled "New York City Tells Teens: Be Smart About Sex," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[71] Issues and Action Update, Article titled "New York City Tells Teens: Be Smart About Sex," Adler Hip Hop Archive.

"Before you fall for a lie like this, call us for help. It's confidential. Be smart about sex."[72] In the sound campaigns for radio, Ibreck reasoned that members of the core audience were, "by and large from economically disadvantaged backgrounds […] and the high percentage will be high school dropouts."[73] The assumption was that any elusive or complicated language would "go above [the] heads" of these socio-economically and intellectually underprivileged teens.[74] Ibreck maintained that any message geared towards teenagers could not be too subtle or sophisticated. In his correspondence with Kevin W. Allen (Vice President of Ketchum Advertising), Ibreck contended that Rap was perfectly suited to communicate with SAS's audience because it was a lowbrow art form particularly meant for a class, race and age specific demographic.[75]

As moral reform campaign organizers developed working relationships with rappers, their interactions with Black artists exhibited a level of paternalism that was, in part, a response to the belief that these musicians were not capable of articulating authorities' desired messaging. Over the course of the SAS campaign, the team was confident that Rap could generate dialogue and understanding with their youth demographic. However, organizers were not entirely assured that LL Cool J could capture their moral reform messaging. In a 1986 letter from Jim Colasurdo of Ketchum Advertising to Bill Adler (LL Cool J's publicist), Colasurdo suggested that the rapper revise his lyrics to achieve greater "clarification." Colasurdo stated: "my only suggestion is a line about 'moms' – and I wondered if he [really] meant 'beanies making Babies' near the end there

[72] Issues and Action Update, Article titled "New York City Tells Teens: Be Smart About Sex," Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[73] Letter from the City of New York Office of the Mayor to Kevin W. Allen (Vice President Ketchum Advertising) regarding Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[74] Letter from the City of New York Office of the Mayor to Kevin W. Allen (Vice President Ketchum Advertising) regarding Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[75] Letter from the City of New York Office of the Mayor to Kevin W. Allen (Vice President Ketchum Advertising) regarding Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

(I've circled it)."[76] Colasurdo's insistence on the possibility of a grammatical error, as well as his preoccupation over whether LL was 'properly' addressing potential teenage mothers rather than already existing mothers, highlighted his inability to decode Rap language. Colasurdo had incorrectly understood the term 'beanie' to mean 'moms.' Instead, the term referred to young, intelligent and beautiful girls with potential, who were in danger of becoming teenage mothers if they did not make more informed and responsible decisions.[77]

These interactions between rappers and the campaign organizers who hired them were indicative of a level of careful negotiation on the part of rappers and their creative and business camps. Following Colasurdo's inquiry regarding LL Cool J's lyrics, the rapper's camp authorized edits to the lyrics without protest. In a response letter to Colasurdo Adler wrote: "Jim, we've revised LL's rhyme in accordance with your instructions. You're welcome to revise it yourself at this point."[78] In the final version, LL rapped:

> S-m-a-r-t-s-e-x: the number smart people dial to learn about sex. It may seem great because you think you're a man, but a big head baby wasn't part of the plan. This is LL Cool J and the Cut Creator telling you what happens nine months later. Nothing I say will make you stop, but if you dial the number you won't end up a pop. So get it straight before your time runs out, because babies making babies is not what it's all about. You may think it's a game, you're only playing a part. But if you're going to have sex then you better get smart.[79]

In the revised lyric, 'beanies' was adjusted to 'babies.' LL's cautionary lyrics focused on young men who were warned that while the thought of sex sounded pleasurable, learning of the news of

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[76] Letter from Jim Colasurdo of Ketchum Advertising to Bill Adler, June 1986. Box 6, Folder 46, LL Cool J '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library; Letter to Jim Colasurdo of Ketchum Advertising from Bill Adler, June 12, 1986. Box 6, Folder 46, LL Cool J '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[77] "Definition of 'beanie,'" *Urban Dictionary*, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=beanie, (accessed December 26, 2015).
[78] Letter to Jim Colasurdo of Ketchum Advertising from Bill Adler, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[79] Letter to Jim Colasurdo of Ketchum Advertising from Bill Adler, Adler Hip Hop Archive; Issues and Action Update, Article titled "New York City Tells Teens: Be Smart About Sex," Fall 1986. Box 6, Folder 46, LL Cool J '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

a baby nine months later was not. In the rap, teenage fatherhood was branded as uncool, foolish, and dumb. Following the release of the rap verse, Mayor Koch thanked LL for his contribution in a letter to the rapper's manager Lyor Cohen. Koch explained that in the rap's first airing, the SAS hotline received 137 calls from teenagers requesting assistance.[80] He contended that the "Smart Sex Rap" had successfully reached teenagers and that he was grateful that the decision to apply "Rap language" to PSA messaging had worked.

Despite the success of some moral campaigns, there were rappers who were acutely aware of the social and political usefulness of their art but were nonetheless uncomfortable with the use of their talent and the Rap aesthetic to sell and convey morality. Following the "Smart About Sex" campaign, LL Cool J publicly stated that he had no desire to participate in any other public service initiatives on the subject of safe sex. In an interview with Michael Comte of *Details* Magazine four years later, LL was asked: "do you feel any kind of social responsibility in making records? [and] would you ever write anything encouraging kids to use condoms?" To which LL answered: "Yes, [I feel a social responsibility when I] entertain. [But] not to tell everybody, 'don't do crack.' That doesn't interest me [to encourage kids to use condoms]. I might sing about when the condom busts."[81] LL exclaimed that he did not see anyone, "beating down [African American R&B singer] James Ingram's door telling him to tell everybody, 'don't do crack!'"[82] LL's response highlighted a concern over the public perception that equated Rap music and its audiences with crack. His comments also indicated a noted shift in his thoughts over whether Rap had a responsibility to educate the public on issues of safe sex or drug use. LL argued that he was only interested in

[80] Letter from the City of New York, Office of the Mayor, to LL Cool J and Lyor Cohen (Manager), December 5, 1986. Box 6, Folder 46, LL Cool J '86, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[81] Michael Comte, "LL Cool J: The Hardest Working Man in Yo Business," *Details*, November 1990, 90.
[82] Comte, "LL Cool J," 90.

instructing youth about the outcomes and consequences of unsafe sex, rather than the precautions. In this instance, LL was manufacturing a difference – that is, a lesson about consequences could also function as a precaution. LL's noted annoyance suggested that he believed that the burden placed on rappers to provide moral reform messaging was an unfair 'responsibility' that was not expected from other forms of black popular music.

Rappers were also included in campaigns that served the broader goals of the War on Drugs in that these initiatives endorsed the already circulating discourses that urban teenagers were potential 'perpetrators' and 'victims' in need of the law's reprisal and protection. Take for example New York City's Crack Down Fund which was a city-wide awareness program established by event promoters Bill Graham and David Maldonado as part of the Artists for Crack Education (ACE). The campaign was also endorsed by Mayor Koch, the NYPD, and the NY State Department of Education, and its finances were audited by Arthur Young of the Chemical Bank of New York. In an open letter to record companies, the organizers claimed that crack use had reached epidemic proportions, and unless citizens took immediate action, this contagion could endanger America's "civilized" way of life.[83] By the planning stage, organizers had already recruited the support of local government, police agencies, educators, banking institutions, churches, music industry managers, public relations individuals, and Rap artists. In its infancy, the mandate of the Crack Down Fund was to combat the supposed threat that crack cocaine posed to America's moral fabric. This intention reflected an already established national anxiety in the public discourse. Crack Down Fund organizers arranged a series of educational events and a benefit concert to address this moral panic over crack in partnership with the New York Department of Education under the

[83] Template Letter Out to Record Companies, Press Release from Bill Graham Presents (BGP), 1986. Box 12, Folder 6, Run-DMC Press Releases from the Howard Bloom Agency, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

direction of Chancellor Nathan Quinones. Organizers claimed that the rally and concert would be used to generate proceeds that would be funnelled to the ACE project.[84] Organizers promised that the program would bring "role model celebrities" from the worlds of music, film, and theatre to visit with elementary, junior high school and high school students, and help produce radio and television 'spots.' Artists would do so on an ongoing basis throughout the year in tandem with professional crack abuse specialists. These PSAs were distributed via regular media channels throughout the New York school system, and to any other educational and rehabilitation systems throughout the country at a cost. Organizers provided the NYC Board of Education with the funds needed to establish new crack awareness programs that would be created in collaboration with Crack Down Fund.[85] This choice was consistent with the belief that youth were potential "victims" in need of direction. Crack Down Fund organizers agreed that youth had to be educated about addiction and protected from recruitment into the drug trade as suppliers. This belief served the broader goals of drug and sentencing laws in that gatekeepers endorsed the already circulating discourse that urban teenagers were 'perpetrators' in need of the law's reprisal and 'victims' in need of the law's protection.

In their moral reform messaging on the subject of drug use, rappers conveyed to urban youth that crack use was connected to a lack of success. Organizers began the initiative on October 23, 1986 with "Crack Abuse Day" which featured teach-ins at every educational facility in the city, including a Crack Down rally on the steps of city hall. The following day, organizers and the New York City MTA postered and distributed leaflets at all subway express stops as part of "Crack Subway Day." On October 25, 1986 anti-crack messages flooded the radio airwaves as part of

[84] Template Letter Out to Record Companies, Press Release from Bill Graham Presents (BGP), Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[85] Template Letter Out to Record Companies, Press Release from Bill Graham Presents (BGP), Adler Hip Hop Archive.

"Crack Media Day." Organizers also announced essay and rap contest winners from the "Why Say No To Crack" event. Each winner would be a guest at the upcoming Crack Down concert. Mayor Koch even decreed October 31, 1986 as "Crack Down Day" and commemorated the Crack Down Project by authorizing that New York City church bells rang at noon. Later that evening, several artists gathered at Madison Garden for an anti-crack benefit concert. The event, which was sponsored in part by Michael Jackson's CBS manager Walter Yetnikoff with a $50,000 contribution, consisted of performances from the rock bands Allman Brothers Band, Crosby Stills and Nash, and Santana; salsa band Ruben Blades y Seis Del Solar; traditional African drummer Olatunji; and Rap group Run DMC.[86] When asked why they decided to collaborate on this public education initiative, Run DMC stated: "we've always been 100% against drugs. […] We tell kids look at us, how successful we are. Then we tell 'em [that] if they use drugs, they'll never get up here."[87]

By the mid-to-late 1980s, the use of rappers in anti-crack campaigns was, in part, a strategy to combat the growing public perception that Rap encouraged, and even glamorized drug use. This was particularly evident in the correspondence between the Just Say No Foundation (JSNF) and LL Cool J's RUSH management. The JSNF campaign drew on drug abuse education that was funded by the National Institutes of Health and pioneered by University of Houston Social Psychology Professor Richard I. Evans in the 1970s. With the help of First Lady Nancy Reagan, JSNF became a prominent national advertising campaign in the 1980s following the formation of a "Just Say No" club in Oakland. This moral reform program was intended to discourage children from engaging in illegal recreational drug use, combatting the strategies of drug dealers, and

[86] Template Letter Out to Record Companies, Press Release from Bill Graham Presents (BGP), 1986. Box 12, Folder 6, Run-DMC Press Releases from the Howard Bloom Agency, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[87] David Hinckley, "The Big Crack Attack: Who Says Rock Promotes Drug Use? Not These Singers," *Extra*, October 7, 1986.

demanding of the American public that they become "unyielding and inflexible in [their] opposition to drugs."[88] On May 13, 1988, the JSNF presented a "Just Say No" benefit concert in partnership with the Frito Lay food company at Radio City Music Hall. The event featured donated performances from R&B act Zapp featuring Roger, dance band The Jets, pop star Stacey Q, and rapper LL Cool J.[89] In a letter from Frito Lay Vice President of Marketing Mike Maloney to Tom Adams (the President of the Just Say No Foundation), Maloney commended the JSNF for rallying teens behind the anti-drug cause and enlisting musicians as role models.[90] However, in a series of letters between LL Cool J's Director of Communications Bill Adler, First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS) Nancy Reagan, and Executive Director of the JSNF Ivy G. Cohen, the rapper and his team argued that the JSNF appeared to be drawing negative connections between Rap, crack cocaine users and black communities.[91] Adler argued, "we wondered why it was that JSNF couldn't persuade any notable white artists to join the bill, and hesitated to join it ourselves because such a bill gives the impression that drug use is only a problem in the black community."[92] This concern was not without merit given that two years earlier, President Ronald Reagan and his wife withdrew their endorsement of an anti-drug concert once Mrs. Reagan learned of the inclusion of

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[88] CNN, "1986: Nancy Reagan's 'Just Say No' Campaign," *CNN.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQXgVM30mIY, published February 28, 2011 (accessed January 2, 2019).
[89] Press Release from The Just Say No Foundation, "Tickets Now Available for All-Star Concert to Benefit the Just Say No Foundation," April 14, 1988. Box 7, Folder 5, LL Cool J '88, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[90] Letter from Frito Lay's Mike Maloney (Vice President of Marketing) to Tom Adams (President of the Just Say No Foundation), March 30, 1988. Box 7, Folder 5, LL Cool J '88, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[91] In Adler's letter, he admitted that his colleagues questioned whether fans might assume that LL's popularity was in decline due to the small location he was asked to perform at (for the JSNF event) only six months after his sold out Madison Square Garden performance. He suggested that this belief might negatively impact ticket sales for his upcoming Madison Gardens appearance. See, Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, May 31, 1988. Box 7, Folder 5, LL Cool J '88, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[92] Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

Rock and Rap musicians. She believed that both genres encouraged drug use.[93] Despite Rush Management's initial concerns, Adler admitted that they were "hopeful that any publicity coming out of the event which linked you [JSNF] personally to LL might help correct the popular misconception that Rap in general, and LL's music in particular, is music made by and for thugs."[94]

Yet again, private correspondence between rappers (and their creative and business camps) and social reform organizations demonstrated a noted power dynamic as well as the perception that artists were being exploited in a way that did not serve their brand. According to Adler, on the evening of the JSNF's fundraiser, LL, six of his associates and his mother attended the $1,000 per plate formal pre-show dinner in the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf Astoria. Adler claimed that while Reagan and the members of the dinner's committee were listed as guests on the Media Fact Sheet, they did not attend. Adler admitted that he also took issue with the delay in LL's stage start time. He claimed that LL was stalled until 1:15 am, and by that hour the rapper's target audience (average age of 14) was already "delirious with restlessness."[95] In a letter to Nancy Reagan, Adler stated, "so there we were, the hired help, standing around twiddling our thumbs and wondering, in our naïveté, what kind of a party it is where none of the hosts show up."[96] Adler also articulated discontent over the lack of publicity from a competent promoter. He called the event a "money loser" rather than a fundraiser. He asked, "how could a show for a worthy cause, starring some of today's biggest stars, at one of the world's most famous theatres, fail to generate even one review in any of this city's daily newspapers?" Adler accused JSNF organizers of failing to generate positive press for LL Cool J – whether it was rubbing elbows with the esteemed organizers or

[93] David Hinckley, "The Big Crack Attack: Who Says Rock Promotes Drug Use? Not These Singers."
[94] Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[95] Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[96] Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

capitalizing upon a photo opportunity with Nancy Reagan. Instead, the rapper received a case of Doritos chips. [97]

The mismanagement – or perhaps even the undermining – of communication in the JSNF case demonstrates how rappers were often dismissed as valued partners in moral reform campaigning. According to Adler, in the aftermath of the JSNF event, staff and organizers ignored Adler's request for a personal 'thank you' note from the First Lady. Adler claimed that when he contacted Ivy Cohen's office, his call was ignored for a week. Cohen later instructed her assistant to call Adler and insist that since Reagan had not attended the event, it would not be right to send Rush Management a 'thank you' note. Adler found this baffling and asked Reagan, "whether or not you attended, doesn't Just Say No remain your organization? Isn't that your name above the logo on your stationary?"[98] Adler accused Reagan of having a lack of manners, manipulating black community members, and treating her Black guests as "step-children." By this phrase Adler meant that the JSNF had invited these artists out of obligation rather than a genuine desire to collaborate. He asked Reagan, "can you see any reason why LL shouldn't feel that way about you?" Adler wittily concluded: "Believe this: the next time JSNF calls us, we'll know what to do. We're just going to say no."[99]

At times, interactions between rappers and campaign organizers demonstrated the unwillingness of elites to address issues of power, artist exploitation, and manipulation in their working relationship. Following LL's interaction with the JSNF organizers, Cohen wrote in a two page memo that the JSNF had also hoped that Reagan could have attended but that they had made

[97] Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[98] Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[99] Letter from Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management – Director of Publicity) to Nancy Reagan, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

it a point not to mislead anyone about her possible participation. According to Cohen, Adler had misunderstood, and neither the Foundation nor Reagan had any direct control over the event's outcomes. Cohen contended that while Reagan was the foundation's honorary chairman, she was not directly involved in the event. The JSNF also did not claim to be an expert in fundraising dinners or concerts. Rather, this event was organized by a New York City based public relations fundraising firm.[100] In response to the accusation that the JSNF had mistreated LL Cool J, Cohen claimed that this was a misunderstanding as well. Cohen argued that the foundation greatly appreciated LL's participation and regretted that LL's camp felt like a "stepchild." They applauded the rapper's courageous stance against drugs in an industry where drug use was supposedly pervasive. Cohen assured Adler that the JSNF recognized the power of Rap among American youth. As evidence of their respect, Cohen pointed to JSNF's decision to include a Rap song on their "Just Say No" cassette and have children perform various Rap music examples at "Just Say No" events. When she did offer her apologies, Cohen wrote: "I am sorry you did not return my phone calls of May 23rd and 24th so [that] I could personally explain the Foundation's procedure for extending our gratitude to those who donated their time or money to our organization."[101]

These moral reform campaigns demonstrated the growing disregard and disdain that elites had for rappers, as well as the complicated intentions rappers held throughout the process. In the JSNF/LL Cool J exchanges, while the JSNF's organizers employed a recognizable youth icon to convey anti-drug messaging in Rap's 'comprehensible' vocabulary to American youth, their intentions reflected a set of difficult engagements and outcomes that cannot merely be reduced to

[100] Letter from Ivy G. Cohen (Executive Director) to Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management), June 15, 1988. Box 7, Folder 5, LL Cool J '88, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[101] Letter from Ivy G. Cohen (Executive Director) to Bill Adler (Rush Artist Management), June 15, 1988. Box 7, Folder 5, LL Cool J '88, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

well-intentioned messaging. The JSNF's 'gift' of Doritos and their initial unwillingness to return phone calls suggested a level of indifference to LL's contribution and the perceived inconsequentiality of his involvement in the campaign. It was clear from these letters that public officials and not-for-profit organizers did not take their partnership with rappers as seriously as music industry professionals had. The JSNF's negligible gestures indicated that rappers were merely tools in the much larger political project of the War on Drugs. Industry executives, management and artists also acted out of self-interest when they saw this as an opportunity to mitigate Rap's negative mainstream reputation, increase its public profile and drive forward its commercial success. LL's willingness to participate in state-sanctioned messaging – which was later unmasked as a veiled attack on the racialized working and workless poor – demonstrated how complicated and contradictory the work of reordering the black discursive agenda was. By foregrounding their financial goals as business-people, LL and his management entwined their initial intent – to do their part to stop the crack crisis – with capitalist logic and self-interested market imperatives.

"Tougher Than Leather": Male Rappers as Spokespeople and Mitigating Rap's Deteriorating Mainstream Image

By late 1988, following a set of violent Rap concert-going incidents, rappers intensified their critique of youth and urban violence. News coverage indicated that Rap artists were becoming increasingly active in the struggle to curtail teen violence following the death of 19-year-old Julio Fuentes at the Long Islands Nassau Coliseum Jam Festival featuring Rap acts Eric B. and Rakim, Kool Moe Dee and Doug E. Fresh. According to the Nassau County Police, twelve male gang members attempted to rob and then stabbed Fuentes shortly after he entered the arena at

approximately 9:45 p.m. Fuentes was eventually pronounced dead at the Nassau County Medical Center thirty minutes later. Investigators claimed that prior to the incident, the men roamed the arena's indoor concourse, snatched gold chains, bracelets, and watches from concertgoers, and viciously beat anyone bold enough to pursue them. Injured along with Fuentes was twenty-two year old Rodney Williams of Staten Island, seventeen-year-old Daniel Johnson of Queens, and twenty-eight year old Gregory Davison of Brooklyn. Each young man was stabbed and listed in critical but stable condition. During the concert hours, 100 guards were on security detail patrolling the inside of the arena, while fifty uniformed police officers guarded the outside. In addition, fifty detectives and uniformed officers were asked to report to the venue.[102]

Fuentes' death prompted police officials, concert promoters and media outlets to engage with a growing discourse that framed Rap as vulnerable to violence and criminal activity. Various media outlets reported that prior to the concert, police recovered switch-blade knives, razors, gravity knives, a blackjack, and a starter pistol that filled a box. Journalists maintained that concertgoers attempted to smuggle these items beyond the electronic weapons checks. Police attributed this wave of violence to the allure of Rap music – namely the rationale among thieves that artists and fans were easy targets for robbery because they were adorned with expensive material such as gold rope chains, expensive sneakers, and nylon tracksuits.[103] Police argued that these items (which were part of the genre aesthetic) encouraged criminal activity. In a passing

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[102] Nelson George, "STV Needs Donations for Anti-Crime, Pro-Literacy Vid: Rap Artists Confront Community Issues," *Billboard*, October 29, 1988; Ben Mapp, "Stop the Violence, Kick Science," *Black Radio Exclusive*, February 3, 1989, 15; Eric Schmitt, "Nassau Coliseum Bans Rap Concerts Till Murder Inquiry Ends," *New York Times,* September 13, 1988, http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/13/nyregion/nassau-coliseum-bans-rap-concerts-till-murder-inquiry-ends.html (accessed November 11, 2015); Michael Marriott, "One Is Killed, and 12 Are Injured As L.I. Rap Concert Turns Violent," *New York Times,* September 12, 1988, http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/12/nyregion/one-is-killed-and-12-are-injured-as-li-rap-concert-turns-violent.html, (accessed November 11, 2015).

[103] George, "STV Needs Donations for Anti-Crime, Pro-Literacy Vid: Rap Artists Confront Community Issues"; Mapp, "Stop the Violence, Kick Science"; Schmitt, "Nassau Coliseum Bans Rap Concerts Till Murder Inquiry Ends"; Marriott, "One Is Killed, and 12 Are Injured As L.I. Rap Concert Turns Violent."

reference by *Black Radio Exclusive*, a radio host reported that while the concert security was understaffed that evening, similar acts of violence had also occurred at white Rock concerts with greater consistency though they were rarely reported.[104] By early September, the Nassau Coliseum banned all Rap concerts at the arena pending the outcome of the Fuentes investigation.[105]

Following Fuentes' death, members of public office and the media all but accused Rap music of inciting destructive violence rather than producing socially useful art as they had only a few years earlier. Take, for example, the case of Run DMC. In the wake of the Nassau Coliseum murder, the mainstream press blamed the band for inspiring the sprawl of concert violence from coast to coast. Headlines in several publications predicted massive violence at Run-DMC's 1988 Together Forever tour featuring the all-white Rap/Rock band Beastie Boys. In Seattle, city officials reported that they received intelligence reports that there would be violence at the concert. These claims stirred up hysteria for days. In Cincinnati, stories surfaced that there was violence in the Cincinnati downtown area following Run-DMC's show. However, the tales were proven to be false. According to a Howard Bloom Organization press release and white Cincinnati Mayor Charles Luken, the media's accusations were steeped in prejudice. Both parties claimed that these discriminatory allegations predicated that wherever Rap was played, and black youth took up space, violence was sure to follow. In response to the false stories, Luken said: "it's not a crime to be young and black and downtown after dark."[106]

By the late 1980s, the moral panic over the Rap concert-going experience and the perceived threats posed by its mainly black audience grew louder in public discourse. In news coverage,

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[104] Mapp, "Stop the Violence, Kick Science."
[105] George, "STV Needs Donations for Anti-Crime, Pro-Literacy Vid: Rap Artists Confront Community Issues"; Mapp, "Stop the Violence, Kick Science"; Schmitt, "Nassau Coliseum Bans Rap Concerts Till Murder Inquiry Ends"; Marriott, "One Is Killed, and 12 Are Injured As L.I. Rap Concert Turns Violent."
[106] Press release from the Howard Bloom Organization, 1986. Box 11, Folder 25, Run-DMC News Clippings, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

journalists reported that concerts had become scenes of intensified racial tension, robberies, stabbings and homicide. Concert venues increased surveillance by way of a heightened police presence, metal detectors, and frisking.[107] Journalist John Pareles reported that rappers, promoters and Rap listeners were bothered by the characterization of Rap as a hotbed for violence. They argued that it was simplistic, misleading and perhaps even racist. They believed that Rap concerts rarely reported violent incidences. Pareles claimed that audience members were more often than not the victims rather than perpetrators of concert violence, and the culprits were often non-Rap fans targeting concert venues because of the expectation that Rap fans were well adorned with expensive fashion items.[108] By 1990, the discourses of Rap music as 'violent,' 'criminal,' and 'dangerous' were compounded by the opinion of some that male rappers dwelled on theft, assault, and murder in their lyrics in a way that glamorized crime and brutality. These public perceptions strengthened even as rappers reminded the public that Rap was not the first genre to discuss violence for profit, nor did Rap create the violent environments referenced in their lyrics.[109]

When rappers mentioned the subject of violence in their lyrics, their discussion of state-sanctioned anti-black violence and violence that was the result of institutionalized racism was politically salient. According to this dissertation's sample, violence – particularly street-level violence between men – was the most discussed subject in 1980s Rap content (see Figure 3). In the sampled lyrics, violence was primarily defined as a form of behavior that centered on men and male behaviours whether it be vis-à-vis stories narrating police brutality, gang violence, and so-called Black-on-Black (male) violence. These narratives rarely included gendered violence and conflict with women as participants or victims. When Rap lyrics included women in narratives of

[107] John Pareles, "Have Rap Concerts Become Inextricably Linked to Violence," *New York Times*, September 13, 1988 (national edition), C13.
[108] John Pareles, "Have Rap Concerts Become Inextricably Linked to Violence."
[109] Gregory Banks, "Violence in Rap: It's Time to Draw the Line," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1990, B9.

violence, women were typically the narrators. For example, in Salt-N-Pepa's 1986 recording "Chick on the Side," they rapped, "Don't touch me! get away from me! / Homeboy, you better stop it, keep up you're gonna get it / Your mouth is getting' sassy, don't make me have to hit it / 'cause when I heard about you my teeth just gritted / You told me that you didn't, but I knew you were with it / Bet you got a chick on the side."[110] And yet, while female rappers periodically produced these sorts of lyrics, when violence was taken up as subject and discourse in Rap, the urban experience and the urban as an "ecology of fear" was largely gendered as masculine.[111]

Male rappers used Rap lyrics to narrate didactic tales about the urban as a violent and masculinized space that negatively impacted their cognitive and emotional development and well-being. For example, in the 1989 recording "Peel Their Caps Back," Ice T's lyrics described a protagonist who debated over whether he should murder his 'enemy' as retaliation following an instance of gang violence. The recording documented how dominant discourses of Black male violence and the urban as social contagion took shape. For example, Ice T rapped, "ten brothers died in this stupid homicidal binge. [… but] all the paper's gonna read is, 'a gang murder.'"[112] He continued, "ya see down in the ghetto it's an eye for an eye. […] / In my throat, there's a lump / then I swallow it, I ain't no chump [wimp] / […] Madder than a pitbull / just layin' [thinking of] for a reason to pull [the trigger] / I'm insane, and my homeboy's death made me this way."[113] Here, Ice T showcased the link between 'street justice' and performing a particular brand of Black

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[110] Salt-N-Pepa, "Chick on the Side," 1986, *Hot, Cool & Vicious* (New Plateau Records Inc., PL 1007, 1986).
[111] The "ecology of fear" – a phrase first coined by Mike Davis in 1992 – refers to urban space where the residents are perceived to have breached the code of civility and as a result new approaches to urban planning and management include an obsession with security, the militarization of policing, and hyper-surveillance to control public space and the behaviour of the poor. For more information on the "ecology of fear," see Mike Davis, "Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control the Ecology of Fear," Open Magazine Pamphlet, No. 23 (Westfield, NJ: Open Media, 1992), 155; Hutter, Experiencing Cities, 224; Tonkiss, Space, the City and Social Theory, 36, 48-49, 94-97, 103.
[112] Ice T "Peel Their Caps Back," 1989, *The Iceberg/Freedom of Speech... Just Watch What You Say!* (Sire, 1-26028, 1989).
[113] Ice T "Peel Their Caps Back," 1989.

masculinity that located itself squarely in the 'vicious' inner city. In these lyrics, Ice T framed urban violence as retaliatory, an expression of machismo and a negation of fear. Violence was not merely the result of recklessness, but of grief that followed bearing witness to the death of a loved one. Like Ice T, other rappers such as KRS-One, LL Cool J, and Run-DMC would contribute lyricism and public action intended to chronicle and critique the link between cities, violence and racialized masculinity in the ever intensifying public discourse and moral panic regarding urban violence.

By the late 1980s, male rappers used Rap as a politically useful location to organize themselves into collective artistic action and address urban violence. In partnership with journalist Nelson George of *Billboard Magazine* and Jive Records Vice President of Artist Development Ann Carli, a coalition of east coast rappers organized in 1988 under the name 'Stop the Violence Movement.' George argued that although rappers did not have the power to stifle the flow of drugs or eradicate crime in their cities, they could use their position within popular culture to articulate a contrarian position against gang activity and the use of crack cocaine which was ending the lives of many urban youths. George contended that this awareness campaign marked the "time for Rap music to stop answering its critics. It was time to address the community."[114]

The 'Stop the Violence Movement' was an attempt among rappers to take moral reform efforts in their own hands, reframe these campaigns as a politically useful effort from within black communities, and reclaim Rap's image as an instructive cultural tool. The first thing this collective did in 1989 was release a record and music video titled "Self-Destruction" where rappers spoke out against concert violence. The rapper coalition included two female rappers and twelve male rappers: Boogie Down Productions (KRS-One, D-Nice & Ms. Melodie), Stetsasonic (Delite,

[114] Nelson George, "STV Needs Donations for Anti-Crime, Pro-Literacy Vid: Rap Artists Confront Community Issues"; Ben Mapp, "Stop the Violence, Kick Science."

Daddy-O, Wise, and Frukwan), Kool Moe Dee, MC Lyte, Doug E. Fresh, Just-Ice, Heavy D and Public Enemy (Chuck D & Flavor Flav). The Movement's primary preoccupation was to dispute the mainstream characterization of Rap as an inherently violent genre. George argued that this collaborative record was intended as an educational tool to redress the stereotypes of Rap as a violent genre, as well as the public anxiety over crime among Black youth, and the need to include Black history as part of American history. George argued that in an era of "incipient Black nationalism," rappers had the potential to serve as significant leaders and teach children the subtleties of Black liberation philosophies. Like organizations that had used rappers in PSA campaigns earlier in the decade, George insisted on Rap's value as an instructive genre to address the many subjects that made up 1980s public conversations.[115] However, unlike campaigns before it, the Stop the Violence initiative was not merely PSA oriented. Instead, alongside the moral panic language of anti-violence was a set of pro-Black politics and the desire to use black popular culture to convey knowledge of the "Black" self.

The 'Stop the Violence' coalition connected their work to a broader Black political agenda by joining with the National Urban League (NUL) to address concerns regarding urban violence and literacy. The group's record "Self-Destruction" was released in mid-January 1989 to coincide with Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday and the publication of the NUL's annual "State of Black America" report. The 'Stop the Violence Movement' coalition intended to use "Self-Destruction" to accomplish three things. First, this Rap collective hoped to generate awareness about 'Black-on-Black' crime and point out its root causes and social costs. According to the NUL, in the 1980s 'Black-on-Black' crime accounted for 90% of the assaults and robberies that involved African Americans. The NUL even produced a statistic that indicated that during the six minutes it would

[115] Stephen Holden, "The Pop Life: Rappers Fight Concert Violence," *New York Times*, February 22, 1989, (national edition), C18.

take fans to listen to "Self-Destruction," two Black Americans would be victims of crimes.[116] While the coalition generated a critical consciousness around 'Black-on-Black' violence, they did not call attention to how the term problematically reflected a means of blaming black communities for intra-community violence. Nor had their efforts dealt with the additional subtext of 'Black-on-Black' violence – that is, the notion that this sort of violence supposedly served as a means by which Black people would 'kill each other' and solve the 'problem.' The collective did however generate proceeds through the sale of "Self-Destruction," and they re-directed the money to the NUL's aid programs to address 'Black-on-Black' crime, literacy and youth education. And in an effort to demonstrate that Rap music was an instructive tool, the 'Stop the Violence Movement' reprinted the song's lyrics on the record's 12-inch sleeve and included a booklet of questions to encourage reading and writing skills and inspire classroom discussion on the topic of 'Black-on-Black' violence. Collaborators also developed contests where winners would receive books and rhyming dictionaries as give-a-way prizes.[117]

As rappers used their medium to contest discourses of the urban and Rap as violent, disagreement over the root causes of crime and Rap's political usefulness emerged within the Rap community in a series of public protests and panel discussions. In February 1989, journalist Nelson George and rappers Kool Moe Dee, KRS One, Just Ice, Chuck D and Stetsasonic's Daddy-O and Delight attended a rally at New York City's Apollo Theatre. While walking to the Adam Clayton Powell State office building on 125th Street, the participating rappers carried a coffin to symbolize the nation's Black crime victims. This coffin was closely followed by approximately 100 high

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[116] Nelson George, "STV Needs Donations for Anti-Crime, Pro-Literacy Vid: Rap Artists Confront Community Issues"; Fax, "STV Press Release, Page 2," 1988-1989. Box 16, Folder 6, Stop the Violence Movement, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library; Steve Bloom, "In Harlem a Rap Against Violence," *Newsday*, February 15, 1989. Box 16, Folder 6, Stop the Violence Movement, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[117] Nelson George, "STV Needs Donations for Anti-Crime, Pro-Literacy Vid: Rap Artists Confront Community Issues"; Fax, "STV Press Release, Page 2," 1988-1989; Steve Bloom, "In Harlem a Rap Against Violence."

school students. In a press conference following the event, rappers articulated their discontent over urban violence and Rap's negative reputation in mainstream media. Chuck D argued: "the violence is the result of [a] school system that's not teaching us the rules of the game. […] I compare it to basketball. If you don't know the rules, you get called for traveling. What happens when we leave these schools is the same thing: we get called for traveling."[118] Kool Moe Dee re-directed the conversation. He argued that rappers were "50% to blame" for the genre's bad reputation. Dee contended that rappers, "projected an image that has no social relevance or substance." He claimed, "there's been too much of a focus on money. We have to go deeper than that. We're not all about sneakers without laces and fat gold chains. We have to become leaders with a positive message."[119] Seven months later, rappers LL Cool J, Public Enemy's Chuck D and Flavor Flav, Doug E. Fresh, and Boogie Down Productions debated one another during the "Rappers Rally Against Violence" event. Along with independent director Spike Lee and Borough President of Manhattan David Dinkins (who would later become the first African American mayor of New York City), these men marched in a second rally and sat in on a panel discussion at the Harlem State Office Building regarding the issue of drugs and violence in the Black community.[120]

Approximately a year later, rappers on the American west coast debated over urban violence and the role of Rap music as an instructive political tool. Rappers present at the gathering contested the notion that anti-violence was an exclusively east coast phenomenon and that California Rap artists were uninterested in promoting socially conscious lyricism and art activism.

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[118] Steve Bloom, "In Harlem a Rap Against Violence," *Newsday*, February 15, 1989. Box 16, Folder 6, Stop the Violence Movement, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[119] Steve Bloom, "In Harlem a Rap Against Violence," *Newsday*, February 15, 1989. Box 16, Folder 6, Stop the Violence Movement, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[120] Memo from Bill Adler to Lyor Cohen, Russell Simmons, Darren Jordan, Wes Johnson, and Carmen Ashhurst, September 15, 1989. Box 7, Folder 7, LL Cool J '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

At the event, Michael Concepcion, president of the newly formed Grand Jury Records told *Billboard Magazine*,

> I used to be a member of one of the largest gangs in Compton. […] I got tired of the killing, and I was looking for ways to get the message to the youth today. So I decided to go personally to ask all these rappers who are good friends of mine to come along and do this charity thing and give the proceeds to help Black youth.[121]

The outcome of this decision was a Rap single and video project titled "We're All in the Same Gang." The initiative featured a mostly male cohort – nine male rappers and four male Rap groups – as well as one female rapper and one female Rap group. The artists included Tone Loc, Eazy E, NWA, Ice T, MC Hammer, Young MC, DOC, Michel'le, Def Jef, Body & Soul, Oaktown's 3-5-7, King Tee, JJ Fadd, and Digital Underground. Each of these musicians articulated a desire to assist Project Build, a local Los Angeles youth education organization, as well as several Black youth charities in 28 other states. Their support was supplemented by a corporate sponsorship from shoe conglomerate Reebok – a corporate entity that would begin developing an important commercial and synergistic relationship with Rap music and rappers moving forward.[122]

While it appeared that rappers on both American coasts agreed that musicians should address concerns over urban violence, not all rappers agreed that violence was an unhealthy response in conflict resolution. Three years after the initiation of the "Stop Violence Movement," KRS-One, a key Rap spokesperson by the late 1980s, rejected the project's core value just as LL Cool J had questioned the key concept of his SAS campaign years earlier. In an interview with Michael Lipscomb of *Transition* Magazine, KRS admitted that there had been some internal conflict with other members of the 'Stop the Violence Movement' because he agreed with violence in some contexts. He claimed, "I'm down with violence actually. […] When people come to me

[121] "A Message of Peace Outta Compton: Rappers Unite For Anti-Violence Project," *Billboard*, May 5, 1990.
[122] "A Message of Peace Outta Compton: Rappers Unite For Anti-Violence Project."

violent, I react according to the situation. Sometimes people come to me peaceful, and you must be violent."[123] KRS-One's insistence that violence was at times necessary and that non-violence was not always the desired response, troubled some members of the 'Stop the Violence Movement.' Statements like KRS-One's only served to strengthen the growing perception in the late 1980s among elites and other members of the public that Rap had an intimate and troubling relationship with violence that required a response.

Recognition, Not Repudiation: The 1989 Grammy Awards Boycott

In 1989, following a controversial National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) decision, the Grammys decided not to include a presentation of the award for Best Rap Performance in its live telecast. Organizers publicly stated that the award, a new installation that year, would be recorded earlier and announced along with the majority of awards in the seventy-four categories.[124] NARAS stood by their decision even though each nominated Rap recording had gone gold or platinum that year.[125] According to *Newsday*'s Wayne Robins, each of the nominees [LL Cool J, DJ Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince (Will Smith) and Salt-N-Pepa] felt insulted and disrespected for being imagined as an illegitimate art form. According to the Fresh Prince, the Grammys had, "[given] us the diploma and did not let us walk down the aisle."[126] All the Rap nominees, with one notable exception (LL Cool J), protested NARAS' decision. Instead of attending the 31st annual ceremony at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium on February 22nd, the Rap nominees attended a *Yo! MTV Raps* event at Los Angeles' Cat and Fiddle club instead. Those in

[123] Michael Lipscomb, "Can The Teacher Be Taught," *Transition*, Issue 57, December 1992.
[124] Wayne Robins, "Dear Grammy," *Newsday*, February 19, 1989, 3.
[125] Open letter to the Rap Community from Russell Simmons, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[126] Wayne Robins, "Dear Grammy."

attendance included Ice T, Rhyme Syndicate Posse, Slick Rick, Kid 'N' Play, Def Jef, Eazy E, Salt-N-Pepa, JJ Fad, Kool Moe Dee, Jazzy Jeff, and the Fresh Prince.[127]

Among the Rap nominees, their reasons for boycotting the Grammys varied as did their interpretations of the music industry's gatekeeping strategies of black popular culture. When asked about why the boycott was necessary, Public Enemy stated that they decided to skip the awards to support a choice made by Russell Simmons (co-founder of Def Jam Recordings) who called the decision, "the same old broken record snub of the inner city contributions to the music industry."[128] Fresh Prince/Will Smith, who was reached by phone at his hotel room after he won the Grammy for Best Rap Performance said that he was, "more than happy to accept it [but he was] not as happy as [he] could have been."[129] He claimed that NARAS' decision not to televise the award, "detract[ed] from the excitement of the award."[130] He told the *LA Times* that he had no regrets about his decision to protest. Smith maintained that, "the way it happened was exactly the way [he] wanted it to happen."[131]

While the majority of Rap nominees agreed to the boycott, LL Cool J's decision to withdraw his participation from the boycott demonstrated the role that commercial logic played in the decisions of some rappers. In a letter from his manager Lyor Cohen to Rush Management's Director of Communications Bill Adler, Cohen claimed that he asked LL to appear on the Arsenio Hall Show alongside Salt 'N' Pepa in support of the boycott. LL declined to participate. He maintained that he did not see a reason to attend Arsenio if he did not have an album to promote. As LL had articulated in the past while working on PSAs, his public action was often motivated

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[127] Ted Demme, "Who Gives A **** About A God-Damn Grammy?!," *The Source*, March 1989, 4.
[128] The Associated Press, "Group to Boycott Grammys," *New York Times*, February 20, 1991.
[129] Dennis Hunt and Steve Hochman, "GRAMMYS '89: Backstage Harmony: Talk About Rap and a Boycott Flap," *The LA Times*, February 23, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-02-23/news/mn-228_1_backstage-harmony, (accessed December 26, 2015).
[130] Dennis Hunt and Steve Hochman, "GRAMMYS '89: Backstage Harmony: Talk About Rap and a Boycott Flap."
[131] Dennis Hunt and Steve Hochman, "GRAMMYS '89: Backstage Harmony: Talk About Rap and a Boycott Flap."

by business concerns.[132] Cohen told Adler that he did not "know what the fuck L [was] thinking, but […] he's blowing it."[133] Cohen believed that LL's high public profile would strengthen the boycott's effectiveness. While Cohen was unsure of how to proceed, he was confident that forcing the rapper to do something against his will was not the answer.[134] LL's reason for opting out of the boycott may not have been entirely apparent, though his desire to center his artistic reputation and profitability over the concerns of peers regarding Rap's exclusion from mainstream recognition was telling.

Unlike LL, rapper Kool Moe Dee's decision to opt out of the boycott generated a public conversation over Rap music's negative reputation and the ethical responsibility Black musicians had to their communities. In an open letter following Dee's decision to shun the boycott, he explained that while he respected the boycotters, he believed that they were acting out of frustration over being excluded from something that Rap artists supposedly never cared about. Dee argued that the boycott was ineffectual because its numbers were small. He believed that if these artists had brought record companies on board, the boycott might have made an impact. He contended that the boycott was a negative move because, "middle America [was] basically intimidated by Rap, [… and] it [was] time someone came out and gave Rap a different look."[135] Dee argued that his goal was to establish the longevity of the art form and the evolution of the Black race. He was

[132] Letter from Lyor Cohen to Bill Adler regarding the Grammy Awards boycott, February 14, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[133] Letter from Lyor Cohen to Bill Adler regarding the Grammy Awards boycott, February 14, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[134] Letter from Lyor Cohen to Bill Adler regarding the Grammy Awards boycott, February 14, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[135] Open letter from Kool Moe Dee, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library; David Browne, "The 1989 Grammys: What Happened Off the Record," 1989. #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

not interested in enjoying recognition from NARAS.[136] Dee told the press that the boycott was not real and that it was not the brainchild of rappers. He believed that it was simply the act of one embittered management company – namely Rush Management which promoted rap acts LL Cool J, Public Enemy, and Run DMC among others.[137]

The Grammy boycott generated a pointed conversation within Rap circles about whether rappers should prioritize mainstream recognition and commercial imperatives over the political usefulness of their art. During the public controversy, Kool Moe Dee argued that the architects of Rap were not initially concerned with mainstream recognition. His Rap origin narrative presented an 'innocent' and 'purer' Rap culture that prioritized art for art's sake. Otherwise put, Dee suggested that rappers were not initially in search of visibility, awards, or fortune. Rather, these were principles that musicians allegedly embraced once they entered the music business. Dee appeared to be valorizing an early Rap value system, rather than one that had been supposedly distorted by interactions with industry professionals. Absent from Dee's statement was the acknowledgment that art, particularly music-making, was usually a business venture with capitalist imperatives. Dee's statement did not acknowledge that Black artists have had particularly long and troubling histories largely marked by exploitation with the music industry – one that Rap nominees were responding to in its 1989 variety. And so, by problematizing the boycott as an initiative driven by a desire for public recognition and inclusion into a system of power that rappers initially wanted no part, Dee minimized his peers' critique. He also discounted the questions about power

[136] Open letter from Kool Moe Dee, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library; David Browne, "The 1989 Grammys: What Happened Off the Record," 1989. #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[137] Letter from Bill Adler (Director of Publicity) to Duane, March 14, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

and exploitation that boycotting rappers were raising and suggesting were still very much at work in the American music industry.

Prominent voices from within the Rap community did not refrain from chastising peers who did not support the Grammy boycott. For example, in response to Kool Moe Dee's critique, Russell Simmons wrote an open letter to the Rap community and scorned Dee's response as selfish. Simmons argued that Dee was an opportunist using this moment to boost his career and promote himself as the "good guy" to Grammy producers to steal the place of Fresh Prince and Jazzy Jeff as presenters in the live telecast. Simmons contended that to make matters worse, Dee was invited to speak on a number of televised news shows during the controversy and he told media that the boycotting rappers were negative public personalities. Simmons called Dee's public statements shameful and part of a continued effort to ride LL Cool J's coattails by being involved in a rivalry to climb the ladder of success.[138] Dee claimed that his position was rooted in the belief that many rappers did not set positive examples for their audience. He also believed that he had a responsibility to take a stand against the detrimental aspects of Rap music. Dee claimed that "mainstream America can't understand the slang LL Cool J uses, why he grabs his crotch and makes the mannerisms he does, so it's intimidating to them."[139] By denunciating LL's supposedly obscene sexuality and machismo as problematic and intimidating, Dee juxtaposed his behaviour as more desirable.[140] In response, LL's management claimed that their artist's success rested on his "boy-next-door" respectability and charm. They rejected Dee's definition of LL Cool J and stated that Dee was "a proper Negro" who was "too caught up in the 'positive image mentality' of the

[138] Open letter to the Rap Community from Russell Simmons, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[139] Eugene J Patron, "By Any means Necessary?" *Julian Broad*, 1986. Box 11, Folder 25, Run-DMC News Clippings, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[140] Eugene J Patron, "By Any means Necessary?" *Julian Broad*, 1986. Box 11, Folder 25, Run-DMC News Clippings, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

Black middle class."[141] By drawing attention to the politics of Black respectability, LL's management may have slighted Dee, but they also contradicted themselves by signaling to LL's mainstream palatability.[142]

As the public's dislike of Rap intensified, rappers continued to use their mainstream platforms to advocate for the genre and affirm its value and political usefulness – all the while continuing to address moral reform issues. Kool Moe Dee publicly rejected the Rap boycott and Rap solidarity and took the stage on February 22, 1989 for the televised Grammy awards. Kool Moe Dee walked across the Grammy stage dressed in a powder blue suit and what appeared to be a blue fez (the national headdress of the Asiatic Moors as worn by Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad). In his introduction of R&B singer Karyn White, his joint Grammy presenter, Dee stated:

> On behalf of all emcees [rappers], my co-workers and fellow nominees, Jazzy Jeff, JJ Fad, Salt 'N' Pepa and the boy who's bad [LL Cool J], we personify power and a drug-free mind, and we express ourselves through rhythm and rhyme. So, I think it's time that everyone knows that Rap is here to stay.[143]

Immediately following his politicized statement, Dee asked the pit band for drum accompaniment while he rapped:

> Rap, on a whole, has come a long way. Like Rock 'N' Roll we're here to stay. We critical, lyrical, dissertation. We get paid to rock the nation. We have the power to teach the kid, cause Rap music can reach the kid. So, I am here to represent Rap on the Grammys cause it's like that. Now let's recap, take a look back on who won Rap and who won that Grammy for the categories earlier tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, Karyn White.[144]

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[141] Eugene J Patron, "By Any means Necessary?" Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[142] Eugene J Patron, "By Any means Necessary?" Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[143] "31st Grammy R&B Kool Moe Dee's Karyn White," *YouTube* video, 3:17, posted by chanpara, August 8, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApTPf82LgVQ, (accessed December 11, 2015).
[144] "31st Grammy R&B Kool Moe Dee's Karyn White," *YouTube* video, 3:17, posted by chanpara, August 8, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApTPf82LgVQ, (accessed December 11, 2015).

The duo then presented the awards for Best R&B Vocal Performance by a Male and acknowledged the winners of the Best R&B Vocal Female, Best R&B Duo or Group, Best R&B Instrumental, and Best R&B Song.[145] In this televised moment, Kool Moe Dee became the public face and self-acclaimed representative of Rap music. He used this platform to articulate that Rap had staying power. He also confirmed Rap's anti-drug stance, its ability to instruct youth, its role as cultural transmitter and generational bridge, and its ability to communicate a critical intelligence about the moral panics of the decade. He also used this moment to rehabilitate his image as a sellout and what was interpreted as an act of disloyalty among his peers.

Defenders of Rap music continued to use private communications to articulate their discontent with elites and their ongoing exploitation of rappers and ignorance of Rap music's popularity and influence. In a February 27, 1989 letter written five days after the Grammy telecast, Bill Adler of Rush Communications explained to NARAS President Michael Green that Rap music was an invaluable cultural contribution that deserved respect because it was neither marginal nor esoteric. He argued that Rap was the music of young Black America and likely the mainstream success story of the 1980s and 1990s. Adler accused NARAS of having underestimated the creative contributions and star quality of rappers. He argued, "as one baby boomer to another, you want to think of it like this: Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, Run DMC, Public Enemy, Salt 'N' Pepa, Eric B & Rakim, … these are, respectively, The Coasters, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, The Shirelles, and James Brown today."[146] Adler confessed that while he knew that the organization had seventy-six categories to juggle and that only fifteen could be televised in any given year, Rap was not the genre to ignore. He claimed that ignoring Rap sent a public message that the Grammy's Board of

[145] "31st Grammy R&B Kool Moe Dee's Karyn White," *YouTube* video, 3:17, posted by chanpara, August 8, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApTPf82LgVQ, (accessed December 11, 2015).
[146] Letter to Michael Green (NARAS) from Rush Artist Management, February 27, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

Directors was deeply out of touch with reality and the desires of the mainstream audience.[147] While Adler's letter may have been inspired by discontent over his business clients being passed over for industry accolades, his critiques raised essential concerns.

By reinforcing Rap's cultural currency, defenders of Rap questioned the logic that undergirded elite definitions of artistic merit, value and standards. Adler insisted that rappers were the creative geniuses of the decade. Like industry personnel before him, he drew attention to the relationship between art, capitalism, and the industry's reward system. His critique rejected the logic that artist accolades should be determined merely by creativity and skill level – though he did not make clear whether Grammy members or the genre community should determine these regulations and standards. Adler reminded gatekeepers that Rap had generated substantial profit for the industry. He maintained that sales and visibility should be taken into consideration when determining winners. Adler also mobilized age as a category when he insisted that NARAS' definition of artistic merit was conservative, outdated, and disconnected from youth culture. By linking age to progressivism, Adler scorned NARAS for their status-quo profile and pressed these gatekeepers to reconsider their standards.[148]

Mainstream journalists agreed with defenders of Rap that elite perceptions of Rap reflected conservative definitions of artistic merit and were disconnected and perhaps even racist readings of the genre. According to *Daily News'* David Browne, NARAS was slow moving, traditionalist and disconnected from contemporary popular culture trends. Browne claimed that,

> This [was] an organization that took nearly 20 years to distill awards upon Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. […] so just the fact that a Rap category exist[ed] in 1989 represented a huge step forward for an organization that still showers Bobby McFerrin, the Manhattan Transfer and Linda Ronstadt with awards.[149]

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[147] Letter to Michael Green (NARAS) from Rush Artist Management, February 27, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[148] Letter to Michael Green (NARAS) from Rush Artist Management, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[149] David Browne, "Rappers Versus the Grammys: Where's the Beef?" *Daily News*, March 6, 1989.

In a *Newsday* article, journalist Wayne Robbins hinted at NARAS' respectability politics and generational disconnect, as well as the possibly racist undertones of their decision. He asked, "what did producer Pierre Cossette and his staff think: that if the rappers appeared, [a group of] chain snatching, crack smoking hooligans would descend on Shrine Auditorium? Maybe Cossette was afraid he couldn't control the rappers. Maybe too much innovation in one year was too much for granny, I mean Grammy."[150] In Robbins' critique he connected the Grammy's decision to prevalent public discourses about Rap culture and its participants as criminal, predatorial, drug addicted, rebellious and uncontrollable.

Nearly a month after the Grammy telecast, Kool Moe Dee continued to justify his rejection of the boycott and Grammys organizers maintained that they had not acted unfairly or unethically in their treatment of Rap music artists. On March 14, 1989, Adler wrote a letter that claimed that Dee had created unnecessary controversy by suggesting that the reason the Grammy's decided not to include Rap was because of its "ugly image." Like Simmons before him, Adler argued Dee was an opportunist who intended to cast himself as a "clean-cut" rapper and generate controversy to boost his career.[151] In response, Kool Moe Dee claimed that he was grateful for the opportunity to express himself on the Grammy stage despite having been accused of being a hypocrite and sell-out. He claimed that there was nothing wrong with using Grammy airtime for what he believed was the benefit of Rap music.[152] Two days later, NARAS's Mike Greene finally responded to Adler's complaint letter. Greene claimed that he respected Rap music and its artists, and he was aware that the genre was one of the most important forms to evolve in recent years. Greene

[150] Wayne Robins, "Dear Grammy."
[151] Letter from Bill Adler (Director of Publicity) to Duane, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[152] Open letter from Kool Moe Dee, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

explained that the Academy did not predicate show performances on ratings, news stories of the past year, or the addition of a category within a calendar year. Instead, there was a myriad of reasons that this had happened to Rap music – reasons he did not feel comfortable discussing. However, he did indicate that the Academy made it a rule to treat genres in an even-handed and fair manner rather than being influenced by chart action or pressure tactics.[153]

In the aftermath of the Grammy boycott, the actions of NARAS officials reflected patterns of ongoing discrimination and exploitation of black musicians as well as a disregard of rappers' contributions to mainstream music. In the final passages of Greene's letter, it was clear that NARAS was not interested in apologizing to the Rap community. Greene told Adler that Rap was not the only genre excluded from the televised Grammys; they had not included Gospel, Classical, Latin, and Metal. Like Rap, each of these genres, except for Classical music, had experienced a long history of NARAS exclusion. In Greene's estimation, all of these genres were considered fringe – though for different reasons. Greene's rationalization indicated that he considered Rap's exclusion alongside other fringe genres to be fair and correct. He did not appear to believe that Rap's exclusion was an indication that the Grammys was out of touch, or at worst discriminatory. In the closing sentences of his letter, Greene inquired as to whether Adler, Jazzy Jeff, and the Fresh Prince would be willing to participate in a photo op while he presented the duo their Grammy. Greene believed that "the press would get a kick out of [NARAS' and Rap music's] ability to survive the [controversy] with good feelings toward each other."[154] Greene's suggestion demonstrated that NARAS' preferred to generate a positive public relations campaign rather than

[153] Letter from Mike Greene to Bill Adler (NARAS), March 16, 1989. Box 9, Folder 44, Russell Simmons/Rush/Def Jam '89, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[154] Letter from Mike Greene to Bill Adler (NARAS), Adler Hip Hop Archive.

genuinely acknowledge NARAS' fault. Despite Greene's request, Adler, Fresh Prince and Jazzy Jeff did not agree to a photo op.

"Fear of a Black Planet": The Growing Panic Over Rap's 'Terrordome'

Beyond the Grammy boycott, a cadre of rappers began using the genre's mainstream platform to amplify a developing sub-genre of "Rap [Black] Nationalism" to render visible politically useful counternarratives of America. Charise Cheney argues that in the final three years of the 1980s, rappers generated and popularized lyrical content and visual performances inspired by the teachings of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X and cultural nationalists such as Maulana Karenga. "Rap [Black] Nationalism" prioritized knowledge of self, re-imagined blackness, articulated a counter-discourse to white supremacy, and inspired and translated what Michel Foucault calls an "insurrection of subjugated knowledge."[155] By using "Rap Nationalism," rappers presented a set of intertexts and private geographies of blackness that were intimately connected over time and space to efforts meant to unmask alternative, invisible and violently silenced American histories and the discourse of Black unbeing. Rappers such as Public Enemy, Jungle Brothers, the Native Tongues, X-Clan, Paris, Poor Righteous Teachers, and Brand Nubian among others used the form to name anti-Black violence, surveillance and cultural expropriation. They also promoted

[155] Michel Foucault describes "insurrection of subjugated knowledge" as the process by which historical content (which have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization) are illuminated in order that scholars can rediscover the rupturable effects of conflict and struggle that the hegemony imposed and was particularly designed to mask. Subjugated knowledge are blocs of historical knowledge that were present but disguised and which criticism—which draws upon scholarship—has been able to reveal. Foucault argues that subjugated knowledges also refers to a whole set of knowledges that have been located by those in power as low on the hierarchy of knowledge, or identified as unqualified, delinquent, marginal and popular and even disqualified as a result of their supposed lack of merit. These knowledges are often a differential knowledge that is local and regional and has been shaped by the harshness of oppositional forces, hostile encounters, and historical knowledge of struggle. For more on this concept see, Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures: Lecture One, January 1976," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 81-83.

Afrocentricity, and encouraged conversations about the social, economic and political transformations of a postmodern, post-industrial and post-Civil rights America.[156] Cheney argues that "Rap Nationalism" offered rappers the unique opportunity to cement their role as urban spokespeople in that they generated moments of discursive spectacle where their readings of the discourses of dispossession conflicted with other narratives of urban Black America.[157]

In several late 1980s publications, "Rap Nationalism" was initially lauded for its capacity to generate social consciousness and emphasize the subjugated knowledge of Black American communities. Journalists like Roger Catlin of *The Hartford Courant* reported that Rap's masculinist bravado (represented by artists such as LL Cool J and Schooly D) was slowly making way for a "more reasonable discourse" that took the moral high ground. Caitlin also applauded Rap Nationalists for using the genre to teach African heritage and Black pride by sampling Black nationalist speeches and transforming Rap's fashion. In the late 1980s, many rappers and Rap fans replaced their running shoes and track suits with African Adinkra necklaces, medallions and kente cloth (both in the form of "traditional" African garments and "street" wear).[158]

As "Rap Nationalism" popularized and increasingly shaped the lyrical content direction of mainstream Rap, the genre's audience and artist roster broadened to include other race and class

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[156] The members of the Native Tongues collective include Jungle Brothers, De La Soul, A Tribe Called Quest, Black Sheep, Chi-Ali, Monie Love, and Queen Latifah. Afrocentric Rap first developed through the work of Bronx-based deejay Afrika Bambaataa who was initially the leader of New York City's largest gang, the Black Spades. Bambaataa was troubled by the large number of young African Americans who lacked a sense of pride and often gravitated to gangs as a means of dealing with oppressive inner city conditions. After viewing *Zulu,* a 1964 film about the Zulu tribe's violent encounter with British forces in the 1870s, Bambaataa developed the 'Universal Zulu Nation,' an organization committed to combatting racism and classism and upholding the principles of knowledge of self, wisdom, understanding, freedom, justice, equality, peace, unity, love and respect. For more information on Afrocentricity, Bambaataa and Zulu Nation see, Alridge, "From Civil Rights to Hip Hop: Toward a Nexus of Ideas," 245-246.

[157] Charise Cheney, "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism," *The Journal of African American History* 90:3 (Summer 2005): 284-285; Derrick P. Alridge, "From Civil Rights to Hip Hop: Toward a Nexus of Ideas," *The Journal of African American History* 90:3 (Summer 2005): 235.

[158] Roger Catlin, "Rap Music Cools Its Aggressive Strut; Performers Turn to Instilling Pride," *The Hartford Courant,* August 27, 1989, A10; Alridge, "From Civil Rights to Hip Hop: Toward a Nexus of Ideas," 246.

constituencies. Davarian L. Baldwin argues that by the late 1980s, Rap audiences were increasingly composed of a racially diverse college-aged set of listeners who revisited African and Black Power fashions, hairstyles, and rhetoric to demonstrate political acts of rebellion and resistance. This surge in symbolic and performative cultural consciousness and respect for Black Power icons often reconciled blackness in arenas of upward mobility and beyond the genre's working and workless poor origins. Like Richard Iton, Baldwin reminds us that the consumption of Black Nationalist iconography could close the gap around Rap authenticity by focusing on issues of blackness rather than intra-racial class distinctions.[159] Baldwin contends that as rappers and their fans – particularly Black students and their white allies on college campuses – mobilized nationalist iconography and ideology, they settled the class gap and built a safe space to lodge a counterattack against Eurocentricism and the conservative rhetoric housed within the Reagan/Bush presidencies.[160]

Several practitioners began to lodge their counterattack against state power and white supremacy by mobilizing "Rap Nationalism" to critique the conservative and Eurocentric nature of the American educational system. In this dissertation's sample (Figure 3), approximately 13% of recordings detailed concerns over an educational system in crisis. Rappers used their medium to suggest that the education system failed to teach racialized children about themselves or reflect their histories in the curriculum. Rappers also argued that Black youth lacked knowledge of self and how African descended people were connected to Africa. They often used their recordings to assert the need for Black pride as part of a solution to redress Black miseducation. Rappers maintained that Black pride vis-à-vis education could be achieved by re-educating Black youth and the community at large about themselves by using an Afrocentric curriculum.[161]

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[159] Baldwin, "Black Empires, White Desires," 232-233; Iton, *The Black Fantastic,* 162-164.
[160] Baldwin, "Black Empires, White Desires," 233.
[161] For more detailed information, see Note on Sources (located immediately following the epilogue).

In their critiques of schooling and curricula, rappers demonstrated the political usefulness of Rap music by using their art to deconstruct and analyze expressions of state power and discourses of unbeing at the level of education. Christopher Emdin argues that Rap artefacts expose the classroom as a complex psychic space where racialized students experience teaching and learning as traumatic assaults on their personhood. Emdin maintains that in urban classrooms, racialized students are beholden to a "pedagogy of poverty" which rewards them for being docile, submissive, agreeable, complicit, silent and invisible. These expectations invite racialized students to divorce themselves from their culture and deny and omit their lived experience to thrive academically. This "pedagogy of poverty" serves a master-narrative that overwrites and renders invisible the destructive power relations and traumas that Black students experience, and it does not allow racialized students the opportunity to demonstrate their intellect, capability, and self-worth on their terms. In teaching and learning discourse, racialized students are often constructed as loud, overly expressive, disruptive, abrasive, unintellectual, unteachable, unprepared, purposefully noncompliant, and uncultivated. Emdin maintains that within this discourse, racialized students are only labelled as scholarly once they silence, deny, erase, and discard who they are. This process – which Emdin labels "classroom colonialism" – involves the loss of student dignity and a shattering of their personhood.[162] Emdin contends that in the work of rappers, students are encouraged to see teaching and learning as a resistive space where they can deliberately disrupt to advocate for a redistribution of power. In doing so, rappers – many of whom were also students in American classrooms across the nation – pressed teachers and administrators to value their core identities. These artists then used their artefacts to provide racialized students

[162] Christopher Emdin, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood…and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2016), 13-14, 19, 67.

with the space to be vocal about the way that educators and administrators mobilized their power to condition students into silence.[163]

Rap's critique of Eurocentric education and its commitment to an Afrocentric learning model emerged in recordings such as Boogie Down Production's 1989 single "You Must Learn." In the single's music video, lead rapper KRS-One was likened to Martin Luther King Jr. as he spoke against Eurocentric education and advocated for what he called a, "[19]89 school system, one that caters to a Black return."[164] Among his primary concerns were African American dropout rates and the necessity for Afrocentric curriculum, especially in schools where the student body was overwhelmingly Black. KRS claimed that educators needed to teach children about African American contributions to American society. He contended that Black-focused education would yield well-rounded individuals who possessed a healthy awareness of self and the ability to reconceptualize Africa as the originator of innovation and human history. In the recording KRS-One asked:

> What do you mean when you say I'm rebellious? 'Cause I don't accept everything that you're telling us? […] I sit in your unknown class while you're failing us. I failed your class 'cause I ain't with your reasoning.[165]

Despite high failure rates among students and the distinct issue of a supposed dislike of Black students among some educators – both of which KRS-One claimed were interrelated – KRS-One encouraged racialized students to reject Eurocentric thinking in favour of critical consciousness as the preeminent route to learning. Christopher Emdin argues that when Rap is used as intervention to incorporate Black student experiences, the classroom becomes knowable through their realities.

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[163] In Hip Hop Education theory, Christopher Emdin refers to this strategy as "reality pedagogy." For more on this teaching and learning strategy, see Christopher Emdin, *For White Folks Who Teach In the Hood*, 29, 87, 92.
[164] Boogie Down Productions, "You Must Learn (music video)," 1989, *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop* (Jive/RCA Records, 1989).
[165] Boogie Down Productions, "You Must Learn (music video)," 1989, *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop* (Jive/RCA Records, 1989).

That is, the classroom is rendered visible as a space of fear, frustration, anger, and shared alienation where educators and administrators wrestle over how to manage 'unruly' blackness.[166]

As rappers provided readings of state sanctioned education practices in their art, they produced critiques of power that served a politically useful function to Black youth and their communities. Courtney Rose argues that Rap music's reading of formal education as an extension of the state has long unearthed alternative readings of the student experience that challenge dominant discourses of urban student disengagement. Rappers used their album work to assess, interrogate, deconstruct, and problematize teaching and learning as structures of domination and dehumanization, they mobilized the oppositional gaze to generate counter-narratives about power. In Rap lyrics, schools were narrated as complex spaces that were simultaneously suffocating, asphyxiating and traumatic for students. Rappers suggested that these schools often read students as disobedient, deficient, and in need of correction.[167] Bettina L. Love argues that when Black youth engaged the systems and powerbrokers that defined their lived experiences, they actively constructed ways of knowing that were immediately shaped by and even re-shaped their ecosystems. Love argues that we must read Rap assessments of teaching and learning as attempts to incorporate oppressed subjectivities into resistant spaces and shift the culture of institutions that are governed by racial/colonial state practices. In doing so, these rappers promoted a sense of Black being that was at the centre of restorative social justice work both inside and beyond the classroom.[168]

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[166] Emdin, *For White Folks Who Teach In the Hood*, 21.
[167] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 115-116, 124, 126, 130; Courtney Rose, "Toward a Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy for Teacher Education," *#HipHopEd: The Compilation on Hip-hop Education, Volume 1: Hip Hop as Education, Philosophy and Practice*, eds. Christopher Emdin and Edmund Adjapong (Boston, MA: Brill Sense, 2018), 32.
[168] Bettina L. Love, "Knowledge Reigns Supreme: The Fifth Element, Hip Hop Critical Pedagogy & Community," *#HipHopEd: The Compilation on Hip-hop Education, Volume 1: Hip Hop as Education, Philosophy and Practice*, eds. Christopher Emdin and Edmund Adjapong (Boston, MA: Brill Sense, 2018), 41.

Rappers also argued that the education system was a site of power where curriculum developers, educators and administrators deliberately structured curricula to miseducate, confuse and disempower Black youth. KRS-One made a case for this argument in a *New York Times* op-ed that he wrote on September 9, 1989. In his column, KRS-One took the New York City school system to task for their insensitivity to the needs of African American students. He claimed that New York City schools alienated African American youth by teaching a Eurocentric curriculum: "Afro-American kids [were] taught white American history, while [Black American and African] heritage [was] blatantly ignored."[169] He identified teachers as his biggest enemies – particularly those educators who were hostile to KRS's attempts to inform youth about how the school system had failed them.[170] Public Enemy band member Professor Griff publicly agreed with KRS-One. He argued that American schools were problematic institutions for non-white students because, "[educators] teach colonialism, slavery, and imperialism in the 'traditional' way that it was given to them to teach. The way they do it now is a systematic way of keeping Blacks blind, deaf, and dumb."[171] And yet, even as rappers were generating this critique, there were a number of educators who disagreed with their assessment.

As rappers provided the public with their counter-reading of the American schooling system, a small group of post-secondary leftist academics began dismissing and delegitimizing the role of rappers in the classroom. By the 1980s, college campuses across the country were expanding their admissions to include greater numbers of Black undergraduate and graduate students. As American universities exhibited a greater commitment to the development, growth and legitimization of

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[169] Peter Keepnews, "Pop/Jazz: Rap Leads to Respectability and Academia for KRS-One," *New York Times*, November 17, 1989 (national edition), C29.
[170] John Leland, "Rap and Roll With KRS-One," *Newsday*, November 17, 1989.
[171] "Enter the World of Prof. Griff, Public Enemy's Most Controversial and Outspoken Rapper," *Hip Hop Connection*, April 1989, 39.

Black and African American Studies programs, post-secondary administrators began to hire far more Black faculty in tenure track positions.[172] In the midst of these changes, Fordham University history professor Mark Naison wrote a letter to the *New York Times* contesting the place of rappers on American college campuses. Naison alerted readers to a sentiment among some academics that rappers like KRS did not deserve appointments and invitations to enter the lecture circuit as curriculum experts.[173] These statements were, in part, indicative of the sentiments among some faculty who felt that they were unfairly competing with 'experts' whose expertise did not come by way of commitment to intellectual rigour but from experiential knowledge and a rejection of the respectable path of academia. It is also possible that some professors believed that bringing rappers into the university and legitimizing their instruction in Black Studies classrooms undercut the viability of these educational programs and undermined the expertise and training of faculty members. These academics also disagreed with rappers' critiques of the elementary and secondary school system. Their assessment of rappers suggested that even on issues of formal education there was nothing monolithic about 'the black experience.' Naison also argued that while racial bias in the curriculum was a severe problem, the only solution was political action and careful scholarship. Naison maintained that rappers like KRS-One could not properly address racial bias in American curriculum. He referenced as evidence KRS-One's claim that schools taught events like the Civil War as a "white" historical moment. Naison suggested that KRS-One's opinion displayed a staggering ignorance of African American contributions to United States history. He maintained that KRS-One's level of miseducation could potentially undermine the self-esteem of African

[172] For more on the development of Black Studies programs, Black post-secondary students and faculty, see, Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007).
[173] Mark Naison, "Is Rap Music as Harmful to Black Youth as White Institutions? (Letter to Editor)," *New York Times*, September 27, 1989 (national edition), A28.

American youth, and as such the rapper's counter-reading of American history could be as detrimental to Black students as were the "white institutions" from which they received their education. Naison claimed that the only difference between KRS and American schools was that the rapper had turned his alienation into a badge of honor.[174]

Despite public critiques of rappers and their assessments of power, Rap practitioners continued to provoke a dialogue about the American education system to demand its transformation. Such was the case in August 1990 when KRS-One spoke before 100 black youth at a Teen Leadership Program Center in Dayton, Ohio. KRS-One claimed that white conservative males were trying to annihilate Black youth by denying the achievements of ancient Africans. He contended that the only way Black people could prevent state efforts to kill Black youth's humanity was to "love Africa—[and] think African."[175] Otherwise put, the rapper encouraged Black youth to embrace their African heritage, which he claimed was being destroyed by American education and religious systems. KRS-One argued that centering Africa was possible if there was Black-focused education that privileged legacies of pan-Africanism and Black radicalism. In his assessment of American schooling, KRS-One used "Rap Nationalism" to assess, interrogate, deconstruct, and problematize public education and its protocols, as well as the administrators who used discourses of black unbeing to shape Black life chances in classrooms and beyond.

"Rap Nationalism," and the musicians associated with it, became particularly controversial by decade's end when a member of the Rap group Public Enemy used their public platform to produce a reading of power that involved those who identified as Jewish American. In May 1989, a little more than a month before the release of Public Enemy's recording "Fear of a Black Planet," David

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[174] Mark Naison, "Is Rap Music as Harmful to Black Youth as White Institutions?"
[175] "Jon Pareles, "Street Smarts Beyond Rap's Braggadocio," *New York Times*, July 23, 1989 (national edition), H25; "KRS-One Tells Kids To 'Think African,'" *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 23, 1990, B14.

Mills of *The Washington Post* interviewed Public Enemy's "Minister of Information" Richard "Professor Griff" Griffin. By the late 1980s, Griff already had a history of making several anti-white, anti-Semitic, anti-gay and misogynist statements to the press. In this particular interview he told Mills that Jews were responsible "for the majority of wickedness" in the world.[176] The story largely went unnoticed until Mills began faxing it to newspapers and music magazines like *Rolling Stone* and the *Village Voice* that then reported on it in early June. Once the American public learned of the interview, Griff's statements drew intense outrage from Jewish groups and several media outlets. Some members of the public also began to suggest that Griff's statement was the product of the intersection between "Rap Nationalism" and a toxic version of Black masculinity.[177]

In the aftermath of Griff's statement and the public's reaction, Public Enemy suggested that the controversy was an attempt to distract the public and detract from the band's meaningful discussion of Black empowerment and their critique of white supremacy in their album work. On June 19, 1989, lead Public Enemy rapper Chuck D penned a letter addressed to "all offended, concerned and unconcerned" by Griff's interview. Chuck D openly condemned Griff. He claimed that Public Enemy stood for rebuilding and preserving Black American consciousness and naming white supremacy as the real enemy. He called the controversy "a *Black*, and I repeat *Black* family matter," one that, "had to be made in a Black disciplined manner, since this industry has a large vested interest in the Black community, as well as a history of unfair compensation to our Black

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[176] Richard Harrington, "Public Enemy's Rap Record Stirs Jewish Protests," *The Washington Post*, December 29, 1989, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1989/12/29/public-enemys-rap-record-stirs-jewish-protests/3ac1c658-1746-4ec6-be7c-4a9d52bcd070/?utm_term=.dce37dcfc152 (accessed January 2, 2019).
[177] Howard Druckman, "Dubbing Themselves 'Prophets of Rage,' Members of This U.S. Rap Group Look at Life From a Radical Perspective, With A Medium As Controversial as Their Message, Public Enemy: The Heat Is On," *The Globe and Mail*, September 20, 1990 (national edition), C.1; Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 280-283, 288-289. Each member of Public Enemy had an assigned title, each of which was modeled on the titles taken up by members of the Black Panther Party. Professor Griff modeled his group name on the title taken by Eldridge Cleaver, who was the Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party. In this role, Griff, like Cleaver, served as the group's spokesperson.

artists, producers and talented people involved."[178] Chuck D then labelled his group the "official voice of the Black world," and contended that the controversy represented "unnecessary noise" in the renewed quest for Black Power. He argued that this movement was:

> A self-defense movement that counterattack[ed] the system of white world supremacy, not white people or the religious sects that they [chose]. It d[id] not mean anti-white, it mean[t] anti-a system that has been designed by the European elite for the wrong purpose of benefiting at Black people's expense.[179]

Chuck D reminded the American public that the group was concretely focused on race politics, pro-Black articulations, Black exploitation and confronting white privilege and white supremacy.

At the height of public anxieties over "Rap Nationalism," the Professor Griff controversy foreshadowed the extent to which Rap readings of American race and power would be contested and rappers would be required to manage their peers if they hoped to preserve their mainstream platform. For example, at a June 21st, 1989 news conference, Chuck D announced that he would be dismissing Professor Griff from the group. While making the statement, Chuck D was flanked by his Def Jam record label associate Bill Stephney and Rush Communications President Carmen Ashhurst-Watson. He proceeded to apologize before nearly three-dozen reporters and camera operators:

> The Black community, both here and abroad, is in the midst of a terrible crisis. Our plan has been, first, to define the problems than to suggest solutions. You see, Griff's responsibility as Minister of Information was to transmit these values to everybody faithfully. In practice, he sabotaged those values. In the interest of keeping the group together, we tried to deal with Griff 's problems internally, but we were unsuccessful. […] Offensive remarks by Professor Griff are not in line with Public Enemy's program. We are not anti-Jewish. We are not anti-anyone. We are pro-Black, pro-Black culture, and pro-human. We apologize to anyone who might have been offended by Griff 's remarks. We're offended, too.[180]

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[178] Howard Druckman, "Dubbing Themselves 'Prophets of Rage,' Members of This U.S. Rap Group Look at Life From a Radical Perspective, With A Medium As Controversial as Their Message, Public Enemy: The Heat Is On," *The Globe and Mail*, September 20, 1990 (national edition), C.1.
[179] Druckman, "Dubbing Themselves 'Prophets of Rage'"; Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 280-283, 288-289.
[180] "Prof. Griff 's Anti-Semitic Lecture Cited as Public Enemy Disbands," *The Gazette*, June 30, 1989, H2; Jon Pareles, "Public Enemy Rap Group Reorganizes After Anti-Semitic Comments," *New York Times,* August 11, 1989 (national edition), C3; Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 288-289.

Departing from the text, Chuck D closed his statement by stating, "it is my obligation to discipline my brother if he [has] offended anybody… 'cause our policy is not to offend anyone, it is to offend the system that [has worked] against us 24 hours a day, 365 days a year."[181] Chuck D's statement was designed to ease public anxieties and remind American audiences that while Public Enemy was anti-white supremacy, that did not mean they were anti-Semites. He also confirmed that as the group's functioning patriarch, he would properly discipline his group member for his inappropriate remarks which were not in line with the band's ideology.

As Public Enemy struggled with their own internal power dynamics in the aftermath of the Professor Griff controversy, they also questioned whether elites were actively censoring their reading of race and power in America. Exactly a week later on June 28th, Def Jam president Russell Simmons publicly stated that the group was disbanding for an indefinite period to reassess their future.[182] That same day, Baptist minister and prominent Civil Rights activist Reverend Al Sharpton sponsored a Brooklyn, New York City rally on Public Enemy's behalf. Sharpton stated that he was troubled by what he believed was an unprecedented level of political censorship that flowed from Jewish Americans in both the recording and film industry. Chuck D echoed a similar suspicion over a possible conspiracy when he told MTV's Kurt Loder that, "CBS was holding captive 'Fear of a Black Planet,'" even as many recording industry insiders admitted that they did not know that the group's forthcoming album existed.[183] Nearly two months later, Chuck D publicly announced that the group had re-assembled and re-organized for summer touring. He also mentioned that Professor Griff was now the band's 'supreme allied chief of community relations.'

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[181] "Prof. Griff's Anti-Semitic Lecture Cited as Public Enemy Disbands"; Pareles, "Public Enemy Rap Group Reorganizes After Anti-Semitic Comments."
[182] "Prof. Griff's Anti-Semitic Lecture Cited as Public Enemy Disbands"; Pareles, "Public Enemy Rap Group Reorganizes After Anti-Semitic Comments," *New York Times,* August 11, 1989 (national edition), C3.
[183] RJ Smith, "Public Enemy Quits?," *The Voice*, July 4, 1989.

Chuck D stated that Griff would no longer be available for interviews.[184] Once again, Chuck D publicly conceded that Griff's statements were wrong, and that Griff had apologized to the group. Though, four short months after the group re-assembled, Griff was anything but apologetic. In a *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* interview, he claimed that "what [he had] said was 100 percent pure."[185]

As Professor Griff continued to justify his anti-Semitic statements, some music industry professionals accused the media of using the controversy to fuel fear-based narratives of Rap as threatening, rather than re-focusing the public's attention on Rap's critiques of race and power. In a series of written exchanges between Rush Management's Bill Adler and journalist Jackson Brian Griffith, Adler indicated that Public Enemy was frustrated with the media's continued attention on Griff's controversial statements while ignoring the band's critique of white supremacy and the function of whiteness on their album. In early January 1990, Adler sent a letter to *Pulse* magazine. In the document, Adler suggested that *Pulse's* lack of coverage on the work of Black artists was an indication of its racism.[186] To that accusation, Griffith responded:

> Come on! Bill, we cover Rap in *Pulse* […] we can't cover every release within a specific genre. […] As for me being a racist, I'm not. I hate racism, and I'm not afraid to state that in print. […] Bill, do the right thing and reconsider your hostility towards me. It is not warranted and does us both no good. We're both professionals. […] I await your reply.[187]

In Adler's response, he referenced Griffith's inquiry about a piece on the Professor Griff controversy. Adler insisted on the suspect nature of Griffith's request when he claimed,

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[184] "Public Enemy Still Fighting the Power," *Telegram & Gazette,* August 11, 1989, C10.
[185] "Public Enemy's New Release Promises Controversy," *Telegram & Gazette*, December 26, 1989, D4.
[186] Letter from J. B. Griffith (Senior editor at *Pulse*) to Bill Adler, January 24, 1990. Box 8, Folder 46, Harry Allen Faxes '90 - '91, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[187] Letter from J. B. Griffith (Senior editor at *Pulse*) to Bill Adler, Adler Hip Hop Archive; Letter to Brian Griffith (Senior editor at *Pulse*) from Bill Adler, January 24, 1990. Box 8, Folder 46, Harry Allen Faxes '90 - '91, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

> You can understand my reticence about cooperating with you on the story that likely won't be anything but ugly. That is, the first time you ever call me, and it's about Public Enemy versus the Jews? You've missed dozens of good news music stories, but you must write about this disaster?[188]

In Adler's response, he appeared to be insisting that Griffith's first-time media inquiry demonstrated a desire to profile sensationalism rather than artistic content.

While members of the media were using the Professor Griff controversy to fuel fear-based narratives of Rap, they were also exacerbating existing tensions between African Americans and Jewish Americans. In the exchanges between Adler and Griffith, the *Pulse* editor rationalized that the media had a responsibility to cover the Professor Griff controversy and acknowledge the tense relationship between the two communities. Griffith also admitted that amidst the "media hype about Public Enemy versus the Jews," *Pulse* had no choice but to dedicate some space in the feature to the controversy. Griffith recognized how complex relations between Black Americans and Jewish Americans were: "I think that many Blacks are justifiably enraged both with whites and Jews because of their roles as oppressors, and I think that certain militant Jewish organizations are blowing the whole 'controversy' way out of proportion."[189] Griffith assured Adler that it was not his magazine's intention to approach a feature on Public Enemy through the angle of fluffy journalism and sensationalism to sell their product. Instead, *Pulse* editors wanted to promote great music, and pursuing a Public Enemy feature meant they could give magazine space to the "most aggressive sounding records [in] modern music."[190]

Despite the Professor Griff controversy, Public Enemy released their third studio album *Fear Of A Black Planet* in 1990 which used "Rap Nationalism" to foreground their concerns over power, anti-black racism and the destruction of Black lives. The album was dedicated to the

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[188] Letter to Brian Griffith (Senior editor at *Pulse*) from Bill Adler, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[189] Letter from J. B. Griffith (Senior editor at *Pulse*) to Bill Adler, Adler Hip Hop Archive.
[190] Letter from J. B. Griffith (Senior editor at *Pulse*) to Bill Adler, Adler Hip Hop Archive.

memory of various activist icons, both alive and deceased, whom they labelled as "influential inspirations." These figures included Black Panther Party leader Huey P. Newton, civil rights activists Dick Gregory and Reverend Jesse Jackson, and Nation of Islam members Minister Louis Farrakhan and Dr. Khalid Muhammad. Throughout the liner notes and album recordings Public Enemy foregrounded the concerns of Black men and suggested that Black men were the main target of American racism. The band argued that the deaths of Black men and leaders like Newton, "symbolized the continuing conspiracy to destroy the Black male by murder, drugs, and disease."[191] This sentiment was most evident in the album recording "Welcome To The Terrordome" where Chuck D rapped, "first nothing's worse than a mother's pain, of a son slain in Bensonhurst. Can't wait for the state to decide the fate."[192] Here, Chuck D referenced the murder of 16-year-old Brooklyn resident Yusuf Hawkins – one among many Black men murdered in a string of racially motivated murders by white male mobs in New York City in the 1980s. Hawkins' murder was preceded by the fatal beatings of Willie Turks, a subway car maintenance worker from Gravesend, Brooklyn in 1982, and that of 23-year-old Michael Griffith from Howard Beach, Queens in 1986.[193]

Like their earlier "Rap Nationalism" work, Public Enemy's *Fear of a Black Planet* unapologetically addressed the structures of white supremacy and used the work of a prominent Black female psychiatrist to inform their analysis. Public Enemy's discussion of white supremacy on the album was inspired by Dr. Francis Cress Welsing to whom they also dedicated their album. Welsing was a Black female psychiatrist who was initially inspired to research the nature of white

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[191] Public Enemy, liner notes for *Fear of a Black Planet* (Def Jam/Columbia, 314 523 446-2, 1990), 8.
[192] Public Enemy, "Welcome To The Terrordome," 1989, *Fear of A Black Planet* (Def Jam/Columbia, 314 523 446-2, 1990).
[193] Susan Sachs, "Recalling Yusuf Hawkins and Hate That Killed Him," *The New York Times,* August 22, 1999; Barbara Basler, "Black Man is Killed by Mob in Brooklyn: Attack Called Racial," *New York Times* (national edition), June 23, 1982; Robert D. McFadden, "Black Man Dies After Beating In Queens" *New York Times* (national edition), December 21, 1986, A1.

supremacy in the 1960s when she realized that racism played a sizeable role in the mental health of her black patients.[194] In 1969, Welsing came to notoriety following the publication of her pamphlet *The Cress Theory Of Color Confrontation And Racism (White Supremacy)* which discussed the intersection of biosexual politics and white supremacy.[195] By 1975, Welsing became the subject of controversy when she was denied tenure at Howard University's College of Medicine due to the controversial nature of her theory on white supremacist ideology.[196] In her text, Welsing argued that "whiteness [was] indeed a genetic inadequacy […] based upon the genetic inability to produce the skin pigments of melanin."[197] Welsing contended that throughout history, whites behaviourally responded to this "color inferiority" with a psychological vengeance and "an uncontrollable sense of hostility and aggression" towards racialized people.[198] This racial hostility inspired a level of fear intended to ensure the genetic survival of whiteness. Unlike Ramchand's theory of "terrified consciousness," Welsing argued that white fear and hostility towards Black people was rooted in biology. During the development of *Fear Of A Black Planet,* Chuck D told the press that their record used Welsing's ideas to address, "the system of white world supremacy. […] it's not white people, but the system that benefits them more than us."[199] And once the record was made public, the need for the band to address white supremacy was made clear on the final page of the album's liner notes where Public Enemy reprinted the lyrics from the album's second track "Brother's Gonna Work It Out": "Black Power [in] 1990 is a collective means of self-defense

[194] Richard Harrington, "PE & the 'Pigment Envy' Theory," *The Washington Post*, May 2, 1990.
[195] Public Enemy, liner notes for *Fear of a Black Planet* (Def Jam/Columbia, 314 523 446-2, 1990), 8.
[196] For further reading, see Francis Cress Welsing, *The Isis Papers* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1991); Francis Cress Welsing, "The Cress Theory of Color Confrontation," *The Black Scholar* 5:8 (May 1974): 32-40.
[197] Francis Cress Welsing, "The Cress Theory of Color Confrontation," *The Black Scholar* 5:8 (May 1974): 38.
[198] Welsing, "The Cress Theory of Color Confrontation," 34.
[199] Jon Pareles, "Public Enemy Rap Group Reorganizes After Anti-Semitic Comments," *New York Times*, August 11, 1989 (national edition), C3.

against the worldwide conspiracy to destroy the Black race. It's a movement that only puts fear in those that have a vested interest in the conspiracy."[200]

Fear of A Black Planet addressed what Welsing insisted was the nation's racial hostility as well as an ongoing anxiety about Black bodies and racial mixing. This was particularly evident in the materials that Public Enemy and their management mailed out as part of the album's press packets. According to New York-based writer and Public Enemy's official spokesperson (his official title was "Director of Enemy Relations") Harry Allen, upon the album's release journalists were sent copies of Welsing's publication along with a cover letter. In the letter, Allen wrote that Welsing's work and that of writer Neely Fuller Jr. [author of *Textbook For Victims Of White Supremacy* (1984)], should be interpreted as some of the inspiration for Public Enemy's latest album. Allen claimed that Public Enemy used Welsing's theory to confront white supremacy's concerns over miscegenation, racial purity, and white paranoia. He claimed that while the publication was not part of the album package, it was a reference work to illuminate the subject matter on the album. According to Allen, the decision to mail the pamphlets along with the album "was made internally (by the group)."[201] Upon knowledge of the mailout, CBS Records corporate spokesman Bob Altshuler and Def Jam CEO and Public Enemy manager Russell Simmons claimed that they had not seen the Welsing pamphlet and offered no comment.[202]

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[200] Public Enemy, liner notes for *Fear of a Black Planet* (Def Jam/Columbia, 314 523 446-2, 1990), 8.
[201] "Controversial Pamphlet on Racism's Roots Embroils Rap Group Public Enemy," *The Gazette*, April 28, 1990, H9; Richard Harrington, "PE & the 'Pigment Envy' Theory," *The Washington Post*, May 2, 1990.
[202] "Controversial Pamphlet on Racism's Roots Embroils Rap Group Public Enemy," *The Gazette*, H9; Harrington, "PE & the 'Pigment Envy' Theory," *The Washington Post*, May 2, 1990.

Conclusion

In the second half of the 1980s, rappers, state actors and advertisers partnered to address a set of moral panic concerns, and inform, influence and regulate the behaviours of American youth. Once the public's perception of Rap music shifted from 'merely music' to 'message music,' advertisers and state actors increasingly envisioned Rap as an educational tool. These moral reformers found that they could use Rap's more palatable lyrics, images, and intention to advance their agendas while strengthening the perception that they were concerned and committed to aiding the working and workless poor. These elites hoped to dialogue with American youth – particularly racialized youth who they imagined as pathological – to inform and regulate their choices and in activities in which they participated. Ultimately, moral reformers used Rap music as a distinct urban 'language' that could be, and often was, manipulated to serve their needs and those of the prophylactic state.

These moral reformers found that Rap music's linguistic and instructional capacity also allowed rappers to question, problematize, and even possibly destabilize the logic of America's systems of power. By the mid-to-late 1980s rappers were increasingly labelled in public discourse as a cause for concern, violent, and 'extreme' in their social and political viewpoints. This shift happened just as rappers began to mobilize the genre as a tool for their own education and re-education, and that of their black communities. Once rappers began to use the genre to instruct their communities about black histories, race and power in America, and the ongoing nature of the *duppy state*, they were suddenly imagined as problematic, threatening and at worst terrifying. And yet while rappers had not experienced the hurdles of professors in the academy, the knowledge they produced in Rap texts gave them intellectual credibility, and disempowered audiences access to counter-narratives of American race and power. Rap music increasingly gave expertise to

viewpoint and in doing so, generated fear among powerbrokers of what the potential fallout of the legitimization of that knowledge could be.

The fallout of these shifting, and at worst deteriorating working relationships between rappers and the elite, set the stage for a public discourse that positioned Rap as an 'enemy of the [prophylactic] state.' By the late 1980s, Rap music was increasingly imagined as terrifying due to its ability to respond to, question, expose, and perhaps even disrupt the functionality of America's interlocking systems of power. Rap's ability to educate and generate knowledge was particularly terrifying once rappers began to address the issues they valued without the assistance or support of the state actors and advertisers who had initially hired them for their services. In this period, the instructional capacity of Rap music expanded further with the invention of "Rap Nationalism." While rappers continued to instruct racialized youth about the danger of destructive behaviour – as in 'Black-on-Black' violence – they paid a great deal more attention to strengthening their sense of racial pride and knowledge of self, as well as to the power of white privilege, hostility and supremacy to limit and curtail black life chances. By generating these critiques, Rap increasingly became a location of teaching and learning, and rappers were gradually legitimized as producers of knowledge. Their material increasingly focussed on subjects that mutually benefitted black communities and encouraged the expansion of their social consciousness on the question of power and the abuse thereof. In some instances, rappers did so in a way that made it difficult for powerbrokers to manage and control their messaging. These moments of surveillance and management foreshadowed the impulse among state actors and other holders of power to narrate rappers as unruly adversaries when they acted against the interest of elites and rendered visible Black unbeing and the coercion and violence of the *duppy state*. What follows in the subsequent chapter is an exploration of how members of the media, corporate elites, state actors and arms of

the state mobilized a narrative of Rap as terror to justify *duppy state* violence, imagine American audiences as 'vulnerable' to the supposed threat of rappers, and undermine the efforts of rappers to maximize Rap music's political usefulness.

- CHAPTER FOUR -
"As Nasty As They Wanna Be": Black (Un)Freedom and Debates Over Censorship and Power During the Rise of Gangsta Rap

"We've got white-collar people trying to grab our style / saying we're too nasty [...] / Corrupted politicians playing games / bringing us down to boost their fame / [...] We stand tall from beginning to end / with the help from fans and all our friends / Freedom of speech will never die / For us to help, our ancestors died / Don't keep thinking that we will quit / we'll always stand and never sit / We're 2 live, 2 black, 2 strong / Doing the right thing and not the wrong / so listen up y'all to what we say / we won't be banned in the U.S.A.!" – Fresh Kid Ice[1]

On August 9, 1988 Gangsta Rap group N.W.A. (an abbreviation for Niggaz Wit Attitudes) released the recording "Fuck the Police" from their debut album *Straight Outta Compton,* which detailed the brutal architectures of policing and criminal justice from the vantage point of young, Black men living in urban spaces. The recording narrated the quintet presenting testimony in a fictive court of law following a series of police encounters. "Fuck the Police" imagined policing as an abuse of power and brutal violence; an exercise of racial repression shaped by narratives of Black (masculine) youth criminality; the homoerotic desire for the Black body; and an instance of racial desertion in the case of African American officers thirsting for power and (white) acceptance. Ice Cube rapped:

> Fuck the police! Comin' straight from the underground / A young nigga got it bad 'cause I'm brown / And not the other color, so police think / They have the authority to kill a minority / Fuck that shit 'cause I ain't the one / For a punk motherfucker with a badge and a gun / To be beating on and thrown in jail / We can go toe-to-toe in the middle of a cell / Fuckin' with me 'cause I'm a teenager / With a little bit of gold and a pager / Searchin' my car, lookin' for the product / Thinkin' every nigga is sellin' narcotics / You'd rather see me in the pen / Than me and Lorenzo rollin' in a Benz-o / Beat a police out of shape / And when I'm finished, bring the yellow tape / To tape off the scene of the slaughter / Still getting swole off bread and water / I don't know if they fags or what / Search a nigga down, and grabbing his nuts / And on the other hand, without a gun, they can't get none / But don't let it be a black and a white one / 'Cause they'll slam 'ya down to the street top / Black police showing out for the white cop / […] Punk police are afraid of me / Huh, a young nigga on the warpath / And when I'm finished, it's gonna be a bloodbath / Of cops, dying in L.A.[2]

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[1] 2 Live Crew, "Banned in the U.S.A.," 1990, *Banned in the U.S.A—The Luke LP* (Luke/Atlantic Records, 91424-1, 1990).
[2] N.W.A., "Fuck the Police," 1988, *Straight Outta Compton* (Ruthless Records/Priority Records, SL 57102, 1988).

Rappers Eazy E and MC Ren closed the recording by rendering visible the relationship between discourse production and power, and the role of the state in the criminalization of blackness: "Shining the light in my face, and for what? / […] 'Cause the police always got somethin' stupid to say / They put out my picture with silence / 'Cause my identity by itself causes violence / The E[azy E] with the criminal behavior."[3]

Nearly a year later while N.W.A was on tour, state actors and elites fed discourses of Rap as terrifying by arguing that Rap critiques of policing were depraved and unwarranted. This action was prompted by Focus on the Family – a Christian conservative organization founded in Southern California in 1977 by psychologist James Dobson that produced conservative views on public policy. On August 1, 1989, Focus on the Family asked Milt Ahlerich, the assistant director for the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Office of Public Affairs, to write a missive to Gui Manganiello, the national promotions director of Priority Records (N.W.A's record company).[4] Alhlerich claimed that "Fuck the Police,"

> Encourages violence against and disrespect for the law enforcement officer. […] Advocating violence and assault is wrong, and we in the law enforcement community take exception to such action. […] Violent crime, a major problem in our country, reached an unprecedented high in 1988. Seventy-eight law enforcement officers were feloniously slain in the line of duty during 1988, four more than in 1987. Law enforcement officers dedicate their lives to the protection of our citizens, and recordings such as the one from N.W.A are both discouraging and degrading to these brave, dedicated officers. Music plays a significant role in society, and I wanted you to be aware of the FBI's position relative to this song and its message. I believe my views reflect the opinion of the entire law enforcement community.[5]

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[3] N.W.A., "Fuck the Police," 1988.
[4] Eric Nuzum, *Parental Advisory: Music Censorship in America* (New York City, NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 111.
[5] Milt Alherich as quoted in, Richard Harrington, "The FBI as Music Critic," *The Washington Post*, October 4 1989, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1989/10/04/the-fbi-as-music-critic/3f9abdb7-bed1-45b2-83ca-7a6e7da59fa9/?utm_term=.ed63469f5fb3 (accessed December 4 2016); Milt Ahlerich, Letter to Mr. Gui Manganiello, August 1 1989, letter is currently housed as part of the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame exhibit following N.W.A's induction into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame in 2016.

N.W.A.'s manager Jerry Heller argued that the letter was a "rogue action" by a "single pissed-off bureaucrat with a bully pulpit," who was attempting to represent – falsely at that – the official position of the FBI.[6] Barry Lynn, legislating counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, agreed with Heller's suspicions when he claimed that Ahlerich,

> was trying to characterize this as an official position of the FBI, and that's what takes it beyond the scope of just the opinion of an elected official. It's designed to get Priority to change its practices, policies, and distribution for this record, and that's the kind of censorship by intimidation that the First Amendment doesn't permit.[7]

This N.W.A. moment – which centered concerns over surveillance, terror and the responses of Black musicians – foreshadowed a series of contests that rappers would have with social, political and cultural elites in the decade to come.

This chapter will feature an analysis of three widely publicized conflicts over rappers' freedom of speech in the early 1990s in order to explore the nature and meaning of Black (un)freedom at the level of discourse. The first case features Miami-based Rap quartet 2 Live Crew whose 1989 album *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* prompted a vociferous backlash from American Family Association (AFA) lawyer Jack Thompson. While Judge Jose Gonzalez's obscenity decision was struck down by the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, this story illuminates how public debates over 'problematic' expressions of Black heterosexual male desire inspired and framed conversations about youth protection and American 'values.' The second case features a discussion about Rap-Metal band Body Count's 1992 protest record "Cop Killer." This story illustrates how politicians, policing organizations, corporate interests and members of the press used debates over freedom of speech and corporate ethics to submerge Rap critiques of American policing, the surveillance of Black communities, and the violent nature of state power.

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[6] Jerry Heller and Gil Reavill, *Ruthless: A Memoir* (New York, NY: Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2006), 141-143.
[7] Barry Lynn as quoted in, Richard Harrington, "The FBI as Music Critic."

The final case features Sister Souljah, a Black female rapper who became a member of Public Enemy following Professor Griff's anti-Semitic remarks in 1989. Four years later, following an interview with the *Washington Post* about the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, Sister Souljah was critiqued for her assessment of the riots (which was reproduced and misquoted by a series of media outlets and presidential candidate Bill Clinton), inter-racial conflict and the nature of American white supremacy. This case study clarifies how state actors sensationalized and decontextualized Rap critiques of the *duppy state* to serve their political interests and reproduce narratives of blackness as criminal.

This chapter uses these case studies to explore the nature of discursive appeals to and contests over freedom of speech in a racial context where Black freedom was constantly under threat and framed as open to negotiation. This negotiation could (and often did) take shape from different positions in the hierarchy of power. By the early 1990s, rappers were progressively using their medium to document how Black bodies were constituted through and by a deep vulnerability to state-level terror, as well as pathologized and weaponized in public discourse as the source, carrier and ground zero of terror. As rappers unmasked the continued phenomena of black unbeing, their artistic contributions were increasingly called into question, taken up as transgression, and wrestled over as attempts to displace the modal infrastructures of modernity and its colonial underpinnings. In each of these three cases, various constituencies mobilized public appeals to freedom of speech in ways that suggest that this demand was more than merely a call to honor the right to express any opinion without censorship or restraint. Differently stated, how did a rapper's relative position to power shape and condition the meanings of appeals to freedom of speech? And as power circulated, what was gained and/or lost when Black people made demands to speak freely of their b(l)ack looking? Moreover, how were these demands managed by the powerful? Finally,

to what extent were these three cases a reflection of how freedom of speech was strategically mobilized in order to open up, shut down, or erase calls for Black liberation.

This chapter argues that these three case studies demonstrate three critical outcomes. First, Black calls for freedom of speech reflected practitioner desires to expose experiential and material Black geographies while simultaneously clarifying narratives of American freedom and democracy as societal performance. Second, these case studies revealed what was gained and/or lost when those who lacked political clout in the knowledge/power matrix made demands of the state or exercised their ability to speak back. In some instances, discourses about Rap generated public panic (and *duppy state* impulses to limit) following narratives that framed the art form as capable of generating conflict, opposition, annoyance, and destructive disturbance. In other instances, rappers who circulated freedom of speech discourse to open up, leverage and actualize the freedom of some Black bodies, actually marginalized, managed, submerged and erased the voices and demands for freedom of other Black bodies. Third, appeals for Black freedom by the powerful (broadly defined) were also attempts to stifle the conversations produced by Black artists about the circulation of power and its relationship to coloniality in late twentieth century America.

"I'm Like a Dog in Heat, a Freak Without Warning": The Case Against 2 Live Crew

In 1989, Florida Rap quartet 2 Live Crew released their third album, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* which was illustrative of the heterosexist discourse present in some Rap music. Its lead single, "Me So Horny," described the sexual exploits of a young heterosexual Black man who felt like, "a dog in heat, [and] a freak without warning," looking to satisfy his insatiable appetite for intercourse, fellatio, and analingus.[8] Rapper Brother Marquis opened the record by describing a young man

[8] 2 Live Crew, "Me So Horny," 1989, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* (Luke/Atlantic Records, CDXR-107, 1990).

who was, "sittin' at home with my dick on hard / so I got the black book for a freak to call."[9] The young man then asked his sexual partner to keep their exploits a secret from her parents because he was worried that her father would be disgusted once he saw that her deflowered "pussy [wa]s busted."[10] Brother Marquis conceded,

> You can say I'm desperate, even call me perverted / But you say I'm a dog when I leave you fucked and deserted / I'll play with your heart just like it's a game / I'll be blowing your mind while you're blowing my brains / I'm just like that man they call Georgie Puddin' Pie / I fuck all the girls and I make 'em cry.[11]

The record's chorus included loops of women moaning and uttering "me [sic] so horny, me [sic] love you long time" (sampled from the 1987 film *Full Metal Jacket* in which a Vietnamese prostitute solicits sex from two American marines).[12] Both the lyrics and sonic sampling in "Me So Horny" emphasized an interesting case of double intertextuality whereby language and popular culture iconography collided to create a complex discursive interaction between patriarchal and misogynistic fantasy, American imperialism, and how rappers had absorbed the term as part of Rap colloquialisms.

The commodification of Black hyper-masculinity and objectification of the black female body vis-à-vis the voyeuristic male gaze was also captured on the cover of 2 Live Crew's album. Former fashion photographers Mac Hartshorn and Andy Thurman of the Miami Beach scene were hired to photograph the *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* cover. They decided to use local Black women in an impromptu photo shoot in order to capture the essence of 2 Live Crew's "good ol' fun" spirit."[13] On the 25th anniversary of the album cover photo shoot, Hartshorn recalled that the

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[9] 2 Live Crew, "Me So Horny," 1989.
[10] 2 Live Crew, "Me So Horny," 1989.
[11] 2 Live Crew, "Me So Horny," 1989.
[12] 2 Live Crew, "Me So Horny," 1989. The film *Full Metal Jacket* – which was directed, co-written, and produced by Stanley Kubrick – followed the story of a U.S. Marine who observed the range of dehumanizing effects that the Vietnam War and the military mindset had on his fellow recruits.
[13] Alison Nastasi, "The Stories Behind Controversial Album Covers," *Flavorwire*, June 8, 2014, http://flavorwire.com/461426/the-stories-behind-10-controversial-album-covers (accessed August 27, 2014).

women were "pretty much hired right on the spot just to be there," and they were "encouraged to do whatever [we] asked them to" in order to capture the tone of 2 Live Crew's album.[14] Hartshorn made clear that the women were paid for their participation. He also implied that the women were prostitutes when he stated, "I thought that they were probably just pros. Take the word 'pro' however you want [laughs]."[15] In the album cover artwork that Hartshorn referred to, 2 Live Crew was lying on a beach in thick gold chains, sunglasses, black t-shirts, and backwards hats while looking towards the camera from beneath the legs of four bikini-clad African American women. The women were pictured with their backs to the camera, and their buttocks exposed in thong bikinis.[16] By presenting these women as nearly-naked bodies without faces, 2 Live Crew reinforced their 'cool pose' posturing by constructing these women as objects of pleasure and an extension of their heterosexual male power.

The representation of the women pictured on 2 Live Crew's album was indicative of the complex spaces that female fans and practitioners occupied in Hip Hop culture. Joan Morgan argues that female participation in Rap music reflects a complex set of politics that breaks open the "victim"/"oppressor" model of feminist discourse. Female participation in Rap demonstrated that it was possible to partake in the genre's patriarchy and still find Rap music desirable. Morgan maintains that this "feminism brave enough to fuck with the grays [contradictions]" does not make female fans and practitioners any less feminist. Rather, this is a feminism that is expressly different than its second wave and third wave predecessors and contemporaries. Morgan maintains that Hip Hop feminism addresses the complexity of oppression, the hypocrisy and contradictions of self-censorship, and the politics and poetics of desire – even when that desire is oppressive and

[14] Mac Hartshorn as quoted in, Nastasi, "The Stories Behind Controversial Album Covers."
[15] Mac Hartshorn as quoted in, Nastasi, "The Stories Behind Controversial Album Covers."
[16] 2 Live Crew, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* [Album Cover], (Luke/Atlantic Records, CDXR-107, 1990).

objectifying.[17] As such, it is possible to imagine female participation in the 2 Live Crew photoshoot as an example of Morgan's Hip Hop feminism.

And yet, 2 Live Crew's lyrics and iconography posed a danger to both men and women in terms of producing gender expressions, expectations and practices that legitimized explicitly violent misogyny and hyper-masculinity. William L. Van Deburg argues that in the 1990s, many rappers described violent sexual behaviours intended to crack backbones, rupture women's buttocks by forcefully inserting the penis, and splattering semen across the faces of their sexual partners.[18] Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that these anti-women representations objectified Black women, represented Black women as legitimate targets for sexual violence, legitimized misogyny and broadened the range of acceptable behavior towards women to include virulent violence.[19] Van Deburg maintains that male rappers used lyrics celebrating male potency, exploitative sex, the stigmatization of female adversaries, the promulgation of anti-woman sentiments, and a propagandistic vilification of homosexuality to align themselves with hegemonic masculinity and secure a subjugated patriarchal power. However, these sorts of lyrics highlighted a deep fear among male narrators of emotional expressiveness, romantic vulnerability, manipulation, rejection, and the negation of their manhood.[20] Crenshaw maintains that these lyrics and images also reified problematic gender expressions, expectations and practices. For men, these representations taught them that violent misogyny was a legitimate path to manhood. Women, however, learned that their value lay in servicing men and expending their sexuality – a depletable commodity. This decision

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[17] Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist Breaks it Down* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 36, 52-55-59.
[18] William L. Van Deburg, *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 209; Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," in *Women Transforming Politics: An Alternative Reader,* eds. Cathy J. Cohen, Kathleen B. Jones and Joan C. Tronto (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1997), 558.
[19] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," *Boston Review* http://bostonreview.net/archives/BR16.6/crenshaw.html (accessed July 8, 2019).
[20] Van Deburg, *Hoodlums*, 209; Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny," 558.

came with the chastisement of being labelled a whore.[21] Journalists of the period understood 2 Live Crew's material in slightly similar ways. They argued that *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* captured "coarse accounts" of lust, sexual adventures, physical prowess, and one-sided attempts at gratification.[22]

The public controversy over 2 Live Crew's *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* lyrics and iconography began nearly a year before its release in response to their support of Dade County State Attorney Janet Reno. In 1988, Jack Thompson ran for Dade County State Prosecutor against then-incumbent Dade County State Attorney Janet Reno, who angered him by her refusal to prosecute Florida radio personality Neil Rogers for making nearly 40,000 on-air jabs at him.[23] At a campaign event, Thompson handed Reno a letter that requested she check a box to indicate whether she was 'homosexual,' 'bisexual,' or 'heterosexual.' Thompson later told *Nightline* journalist Dave Weir in a 2006 interview that Reno put her arm over his shoulder and said, "I'm only attracted to virile men, which is why I'm not attracted to you."[24] Thompson decided to file battery charges against Reno, and Reno asked Florida Governor Robert Martinez to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the incident. The special prosecutor rejected the charge and decided that the request was a "political ploy," and Reno was eventually re-elected.[25] Thompson then turned his attention to those who publicly supported Reno during her run – enter 2 Live Crew.

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[21] Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew."
[22] Sara Rimer, "Obscenity or Art? Trial on Rap Lyrics Opens," *New York Times,* October 17, 1990 (National Edition).
[23] Christine Evans, "Challenger Attacks Reno as Too Liberal," *The Miami Herald*, 1B, November 6, 1988; Andy Chalk, "Legally Insane: A History of Jack Thompson's Antics," *The Escapist*, July 6, 2007, http://v1.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/columns/the-needles/792-Legally-Insane-A-History-of-Jack-Thompson-s-Antics (accessed January 10, 2019).
[24] "The Virtue Vigilante: ABC Nightline," originally aired December 13, 2006, currently featured in "Nightline: Jack Thomson (2006)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06YSAQQ5wcE, published January 15, 2015 (accessed January 10, 2019).
[25] "The Virtue Vigilante: ABC Nightline,"; Thompson's public feud with Reno continued beyond the late 1980s. In 1990, Thompson accused Switchboard of Miami (a social services organization where Reno served as a board member) of purposely including "homosexual education tapes" in public schools as student resources. This event served as the impetus for Thompson's first court-ordered psychological examination – that he passed as stable. In 1993, following Reno's nomination as U.S. Attorney General by President Bill Clinton, Thompson alleged yet again that Reno was a

In December 1989, Thompson received a transcribed copy of the lyrics for *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* from an unidentified personal friend and immediately contacted state actors to request an investigation.[26] On January 1, 1990, Thompson wrote to Governor Martinez and state attorney Reno to ask them to investigate whether *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* violated a Florida statute banning the sales of 'obscene' materials to minors.[27] Although the state prosecutor declined, Thompson told the press,

> In 1985, I represented a woman who was raped by her husband and forced upon threat to death to engage in the sex abuse of children. After that, I made it a point to ascertain the causes of sexual abuse. I'm interested in the role of obscenity in [sexual abuse], and that's the only reason I'm concerned about ['*Nasty*'].[28]

He told the press that he was preoccupied with Rap music's ability to shape the nature of rape culture and its normalization in American culture. Thompson claimed, "I understand as well as anybody that the First Amendment is a cornerstone of a free society—but there is a responsibility to people who can be harmed by words and thoughts, one of which is the message from [Luke] Campbell [a member of 2 Live Crew] that women can be sexually abused."[29] Thompson's preoccupation with 2 Live Crew's record eventually touched off a national debate about freedom of speech and obscenity.

Although the album had not been officially deemed 'obscene,' the first moments of its labelling as such were prompted by the sales of 2 Live Crew's earlier albums. On February 22nd,

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lesbian. For more information on the quarrel between Reno and Thompson, see, "Opponent Accuses Reno of Battery," *The Miami Herald*, 2D, September 9, 1988.

[26] Bruce Haring, "The 'Private Sting' of Jack Thompson," *Billboard*, August 11, 1990, 9; The lyrics of 2 Live Crew's album were transcribed by the American Family Association (AFA) – a not-for-profit organization that promotes fundamentalist Christian values and opposes same-sex marriage, pornography, and abortion. The AFA argued that the presence of a "Parental Advisory" sticker on *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* to advise listeners of its explicit material was not enough to adequately warn listeners about the nature of the lyrical content.

[27] Chuck Philips, "2 Live Crew's 'Nasty Lyrics' a Bum Rap?" *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-03-07/entertainment/ca-2122_1_live-crew/2 (accessed January 17, 2019); Haring, "The 'Private Sting' of Jack Thompson," 9.

[28] Haring, "The 'Private Sting' of Jack Thompson," 9.

[29] Haring, "The 'Private Sting' of Jack Thompson," 9.

1990, Tommy Hammond was arrested on a misdemeanor charge for selling two 2 Live Crew Records that preceded *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* [*The 2 Live Crew Is What We Are* (1986) and *Move Somethin'* (1988)] to an undercover police officer. Hammond was convicted in Municipal Court by an Alabama jury for violating the Alabama criminal code 13A-12-150 and 13A-12-151 (1975) and fined $500.[30] Hammond's conviction was later overturned after an Alabama Circuit Court jury of nine men and three women listened to experts testify that 2 Live Crew's material reflected a set of Rap contributions that have "artistic value."[31] That same day, Florida Governor Robert Martinez announced that he would be pursuing a criminal investigation over potential violations of state racketeering and obscenity laws that arose out of the distribution of 2 Live Crew records.[32] On February 28th, Broward County Deputy Sheriff Mark Wichner purchased 2 Live Crew's *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* from an open display at Sound Warehouse. He then filed an affidavit with Broward County Circuit Court Judge Mel Grossman asking that the court find probable cause that the recording was 'obscene.' His affidavit included a transcript of six of the eighteen album's recordings and a physical copy of the album. On March 9th, Grossman issued an order finding probable cause that *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* was 'obscene' under Florida statute 847.011 (1990) and applicable case law.[33]

Sixteen days later, Chauncey Reese, a 19-year-old clerk at Sarasota's Tracks record store in Sarasota, Florida was arrested on a felony charge after selling *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* to

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[30] Shawn Ryan, "Ala. Retailer Cleared In Obscenity Case: Jury Overrules Fine On 2 Live Crew Sale," *Billboard Magazine*, March 10, 1990, 1; Brian O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note" *Journal of Legislation* 18:1, Article 6 (1992): 105-106.
[31] Ryan, "Ala. Retailer Cleared In Obscenity Case," 1; O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 105-106.
[32] O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 106.
[33] O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 106.

an 11-year-old girl in January 1990.[34] Under the Parental Advisory Label program, it was illegal to sell this material to minors (those younger than eighteen years old).[35] Reese was arrested after Ann Skolnick (the girl's mother) called in a complaint to local police. Skolnick felt that the lyrics were 'obscene' and that her child had no business listening to them. Skolnick told the press, "I'm just glad that someone has decided to do something, whatever it takes, to keep this trash out of the hands of minors."[36] Sarasota Police spokesman Russ Nugent told the press that the state attorney's office charged Reese with one felony count of selling harmful materials to minors rather than a misdemeanor obscenity charge. This felony count carried less jail time and a smaller fine.[37] James Bernard of *The Source* Magazine argued that the sale was likely a cause for concern because of the child's gender and the long-held patriarchal belief that girlhood should be sheltered and female sexuality should be controlled and protected.[38] The day after Reese's arrest, Skyywalker Records

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[34] J. The Sultan, "2 Live Crew Update," *The Source*, Summer 1990, 16; "Store Employee Faces Felony Charge for Selling 2 Live Crew Album," *Associated Press*, March 15, 1990, https://www.apnews.com/da8e73009cbcdaf927817a5e30a2fe9c (accessed January 17, 2019)

[35] Following a 1985 Congressional Hearing inquiry spearheaded by the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) proposed the "Parental Advisory Label (PAL)" which required that artists and record companies had to affix a parental advisory sticker on physical compact discs and cassette tapes that included offensive lyrical content, excessive profanities or inappropriate references. This decision (a compromise) followed the PMRC's 1985 proposal for a rating system similar to the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) – which included X for "profane or sexually explicit" lyrics, V for violence, D/A for drug and alcohol references, and O for "occult" content. The original PAL label read: "Parental Guidance: Explicit Lyrics." Two months after a September 19, 1985 congressional hearing of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, a decision was announced that music albums could either possess the label "Explicit Lyrics - Parental Advisory" or print all the album lyrics on the back cover. This agreement – a voluntary system of labeling records – was not agreed upon by all record companies, and as a result, only some labels began using the label. On March 29, 1990, in response to legislation pending in nineteen states that would have mandated warning labels for recordings, the RIAA agreed to a new uniform voluntary system for records with offensive lyrics. The existing label was then revised to read: "Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics." Unlike previous versions, the new label would be a standard size, coloured black and white, and always located on the bottom right-hand corner of a physical album release. For more information on the PAL program, see, O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note" 105, 119; Tom Cole, "You Ask, We Answer: 'Parental Advisory' Labels — The Criteria And The History," *The Record: NPR*, October 29, 2010; https://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2010/10/29/130905176/you-ask-we-answer-parental-advisory---why-when-how (accessed May 4, 2019); "Parental Advisory Label," *RIAA* https://www.riaa.com/resources-learning/ (accessed May 4, 2019).

[36] "Store Employee Faces Felony Charge for Selling 2 Live Crew Album."

[37] "Store Employee Faces Felony Charge for Selling 2 Live Crew Album."

[38] James Bernard, "Mind Control: The Crusade Against Rap, Is the 2 Live Crew 2 Nasty for America?" *The Source*, May 1990, 34-38.

Inc. and the individual members of 2 Live Crew filed a federal civil rights action under 42 U.S. Code § 1983 (a federal statutory remedy for unlawful deprivations of constitutionally-guaranteed liberties and other federal rights) against Broward County Sheriff Navarro. 2 Live Crew argued that *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* was not 'obscene' and that Grossman's order was an unconstitutional prior restraint of free speech (and violation of their First Amendment rights) because no criminal court had ruled that Nasty was 'obscene.' On April 19th, 2 Live Crew's motion was denied. By June 6th, US District Judge Jose Gonzalez held that the album was 'obscene' and not entitled to protection under the First Amendment.[39]

Following Gonzalez' decision, various state actors within the criminal justice system moved to frame *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* as obscene and determine how and what the music industry should label as harmful to the public. By mid-1990, Navarro received a ruling from County Circuit Court judge Mel Grossman that probable cause for obscenity violations existed. The sheriff then threatened several local record store owners with arrest if they continued to sell the recording. In response, 2 Live Crew filed a civil rights suit against Navarro. The sheriff responded by seeking a judicial determination to label the album obscene.[40] Brian O'Gallagher argues that while the court stressed that its decision was not conclusive, Gonzalez' obscenity ruling paved the way for the Florida State's Attorney's Office to bring forth criminal charges.[41] Thompson then met with Governor Martinez – who was up for re-election – and convinced him to look into the possibility of labelling the album with the legal classification of obscenity.[42] Martinez then sent transcripts of the recordings to every sheriff in the state and branded the album 'obscene'

[39] O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 107.
[40] Chuck Philips, "Businessman With a Nasty Rep: 2 Live Crew's Controversial Luther Campbell Says He's Just a Hard-Working Guy Marketing a New Product," The *LA Times*, July 25, 1990.
[41] O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 108.
[42] Philips, "Businessman With a Nasty Rep," The *LA Times*, July 25, 1990.

– though it would be Federal District Court judge Jose Gonzales of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida that would eventually declare the album obscene.[43] On July 6th, the Louisiana legislature passed a mandatory record labeling bill which required that records that were harmful to minors were labeled as such. Governor Buddy Roemer later vetoed the decision. He claimed that labelling a record harmful should be voluntary. The PMRC agreed with Roemer.[44]

As Thompson continued his campaign against 2 Live Crew, he used the power of the press to insist upon himself as a vigilante superhero helping authorities solve this 'moral' crisis. In an interview with the *LA Times*' Chuck Phillips, Thompson made the claim that he was the present-day Batman.[45] In an interesting moment of intertextuality, Phillips interviewed Thompson as he shrouded himself and his environment in Batman memorabilia: a Batman watch, drinking from a Batman mug, and sitting against a poster of the caped crusader. During the interview Thompson explained that,

> Batman is just a metaphor I use to explain why what I've done has been received so well […]. For me the appeal of the Batman lies in the fact that he was supposed to be a private citizen who was able to provide assistance to his government. A lone activist who helped authorities do a job they seemed unable to accomplish on their own.[46]

Laura Parker of the *Washington Post* reported that when Thompson would send documents to his opponents on the subject of 2 Live Crew, he would take the metaphor to extreme lengths by

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[43] Marjorie Rosen, "Rock, Roll and Raunch," *People Magazine*, July 2, 1990, Vol. 33 No. 26, http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20118118,00.html (accessed September 14, 2014).
[44] Brian O'Gallagher maintains that under this new bill "minor" was defined as an "unmarried person under the age of 17" and "harmful to minors" was defined as any recording that promoted or highlighted rape, incest, bestiality, sadomasochism, prostitution, homicide, unlawful ritualistic acts, suicide, criminal acts and unlawful drug use. For more on the bill, see, O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 108.
[45] Batman, a fictional American superhero who was popularized in the DC Comics series, was an American billionaire, industrialist, and philanthropist whose primary concern following the murder of his parents was to take revenge on criminals and rectify the balance of justice. Unlike other superheroes, Batman did not possess any superpowers. Rather, his vigilante justice was aided by his superior intellect, detective skills, access to technology, wealth, physical prowess, indomitable will and sense of intimidation.
[46] Jack Thompson as quoted in, Philips, "The Batman Who Took on Rap."

frequently attaching a photocopy of his driver's license with a photo of Batman pasted over his own. Thompson said, "Just like Bruce Wayne helped the police in the movie, I have had to assist the sheriff of Broward County."[47]

While state actors and social elites strengthened the narrative that their critique of Rap was rooted in a commitment to the public good, rappers estimated that there was something much more spiteful occurring. 2 Live Crew rejected the logic that Thompson's obscenity accusations were a result of his concerns over childhood protection, sexism, and misogyny. They argued that Thompson's allegations were rooted in old political grudges. Campbell argued that Thompson was targeting 2 Live Crew because he blamed Campbell for his 1988 loss to Janet Reno.[48] Campbell conceded that during the campaign, his female Miami-based Rap/R&B trio Anquette wrote and performed a promotional record titled "Janet Reno" in support of Reno's efforts to collect child support from deadbeat fathers. The record sold 25,000 copies in Miami alone.[49] On the record, the trio rapped:

> In our town we have a State Attorney by the name of Janet Reno / She locks brothers up for not paying their child support / […] You think you're so slick, that you won't have to pay / […] The proof is here, it's living and breathing / And Janet Reno's makin' sure that I start receiving / All the money you get, all the checks you make / Janet Reno will make sure and take / […] You tried to hide your trail / She found your ass and locked you up / Now who can post no bail?[50]

Thompson rejected Campbell's accusation. He maintained that he was challenging Campbell's "corrupt aberration of capitalism," because "there [wa]s nothing noble or Horatio Alger-like

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[47] Laura Parker, "Sheriff 's Crackdown on Rap Puts Unlikely County in Spotlight," *The Washington Post*, June 17, 1990.
[48] Chuck Philips, "The Batman Who Took on Rap: Obscenity Lawyer Jack Thompson Put His Practice On Hold to Concentrate on Driving 2 Live Crew Out of Business. In Southern Florida, He is Loved and Loathed," *The LA Times*, June 18, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-06-18/entertainment/ca-87_1_jack-thompson (accessed on November 10, 2014).
[49] Bernard, "Mind Control," 35; Philips, "The Batman Who Took on Rap."
[50] Anquette, "Janet Reno," 1988, *Janet Reno* (Luke Skyywalker Records, LS-109, 1988).

about Luther Campbell. Obscenity [was] criminal contraband, and that's what this guy deal[t] in. It's easy to make money selling illegal goods."[51]

As rappers endured attacks from state actors and social elite, they maintained that they produced art within the standards set and agreed upon by the public and authorities. In his defense, Campbell argued that 2 Live Crew had acted in good faith and complied with the standards set by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) when they released their album. Campbell told the press that since 1987, he had labeled all the albums he produced with an advisory sticker as set out by the Parental Advisory Logo program. When the group released *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* they decided to provide retailers with two versions. The first version of the album – titled *As Clean As They Wanna Be* – was radio friendly, or otherwise considered 'clean.' The second record contained the original explicit content. When 2 Live Crew sent the clean and explicit records to retailers they included a letter which explained that one version was for adults and the other was intended for minors.[52]

Despite 2 Live Crew's efforts to comply with the RIAA's standards, on June 6th, 1990, Federal District Court judge Jose Gonzales ruled *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* the first obscene recording in American history.[53] In Gonzales' ruling [Skyywalker Records, Inc. v Navarro, 7 F

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[51] Jack Thompson as quoted in, Philips, "Businessman With a Nasty Rep."

[52] Bernard, "Mind Control," 37; In August 1985, Tipper Gore and Susan Baker authored a *Newsweek* column titled "My Way" that condemned "offensive" Rock lyrics. Shortly thereafter, Gore and Baker were invited on the Phil Donahue Show where they discussed Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) and its agenda. In 1985 the PMRC released the "filthy fifteen," a list of 15 songs that they found objectionable. This list included the genres of Pop, R&B, Rock and Heavy Metal. Some of the songs included: pop artists Madonna's "Dress You Up" and Cyndi Lauper's "She Bop" for their references to sexual intercourse and masturbation; R&B musicians Prince's "Darling Nikki" and Vanity's "Strap On Robbie Baby" that referenced sex and masturbation; and Rock artists AC/DC's "Let Me Put My Love Into You," W.A.S.P's "Fuck Like a Beast," and Venom's "Possessed" about sexual intercourse and occult. The PMRC lobbied Congress on the grounds that the music of the decade was corrupting America's youth, and they asked that the record industry author a lyrics rating system similar to the film industry's to warn consumers (especially children and their parents) of album content. For more information, see, Maria Raha, *Cinderella's Big Score: Women of the Punk and Indie Underground* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2005), 108 and Danny Goldberg, *How The Left Lost Teen Spirit: And How They're Getting It Back*! (New York: RDV Books/Akashic Books,) 128-131.

[53] Skyywalker Records, Inc. (plaintiff) v. Navarro (defendant), 739 F. Supp. 578 (S.D. Fla. June 1990).

Supp., 578, 596 (S.D Fla. 1990)], he declared it a misdemeanour to sell the album in Florida's three counties. Selling the album was deemed punishable by a maximum of one year in prison and a $1000 fine.[54] In order to arrive at this ruling, Gonzalez applied the Miller Test or the Three-Prong Standard.[55] In his 62-page ruling, Gonzalez capitalized on the notion that the album appealed to the 'primitive' rather than rational. He wrote that the 80-minute LP was:

> Replete with references to female and male genitalia, human sexual excretion, oral-anal contact, fellatio, […] sadomasochism, the turgid state of the male sexual organ, […] and the sound of moaning. The evident goal of this particular recording is to reproduce the [hetero]sexual act through musical lyrics. It is an appeal directed to dirty thoughts and the loins, not to the intellect and the mind.[56]

Marjorie Rosen of *People Magazine* wrote that the album contained 226 uses of the word "fuck," 87 descriptions of oral sex and at least one mention of incest.[57]

Based on the assessments of many legal commentators, rappers were right to, at the very least, be curious, if not suspicious of the incentive behind obscenity allegations and decisions regarding their art. Legal scholars Brian O'Gallagher and David Gaertner argue that most legal commentators agree that it was impossible for a court to declare an album obscene using the Miller Test. First, given that the work must be considered "as a whole" – that is, an entire album and not

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[54] Jon Pareles, "A Rap Group's Lyrics Venture Close to the Edge of Obscenity," *New York Times*, June 19, 1990 (National Edition), C15; J. The Sultan, "2 Live Crew Update," 16.

[55] The United States Supreme Court has defined the three-prong obscenity test (laid out in Miller v. California) as: (1) Whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards," would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest; (2) Whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and (3) Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value." Brian O'Gallagher argues that according to the Miller Test, prosecutors must demonstrate that all three prongs are met for a work to be declared obscene material. Once this is demonstrated, any message conveyed by an obscene work is therefore not protected by the First Amendment under the Miller Test. The reason for this is because an obscene work is considered of such minimal value that this value is therefore outweighed by the compelling interests of society (defined broadly and applied objectively) as manifested in the laws enacted by its legislators. That said, these standards and interests must take into consideration all members of the community and "represent not any widely-shared sense of value but merely an average of local extremes." For more on the Miller Test, see O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 113-114.

[56] Marjorie Rosen, "Rock, Roll, and Raunch."

[57] Marjorie Rosen, "Rock, Roll, and Raunch."

merely a single song – the assumption is that an entire album would never consist of enough material to appeal to the prurient interest. The offensive material might amount to a few lines. Second, popular music lyrics typically do not constitute patently offensive materials (with regards to sexual activity) given the requirements of mainstreaming. In light of the Miller Test requirements, 2 Live Crew's album would have had to rise to the level of a "graphic description of hardcore pornography" to qualify as obscene. Finally, records, more often than not, would not pass the third prong because it was incredibly difficult to declare a musical work completely devoid of artistic or social value. O'Gallagher and Gaertner contend that music has multiple components such as instrumentals, lyrics (that in Rap often reflect social values and realities of human conduct), and intertextual components (as in the case of 2 Live Crew's supposed use of comedy and satire). While a song could be labelled musically worthless, it might still be valuable because it contained other elements such as socially or politically minded lyrics, or the use of comedy and satire. These inclusions should protect recordings and albums from an obscenity ruling.[58]

In public forums, rappers leveraged their popularity to air their grievances and suspicions of state actors and social elites, while also accusing them of anti-black racism masked as pursuits of public good. This was particularly evident when Campbell confronted Thompson during a June 13, 1990 publicly televised event on *The Phil Donahue Show*. Campbell alleged that the subtext of their conflict was Thompson's anti-black sentiment as well as his failure to acknowledge that 2 Live Crew was deliberately making music for a racially segmented audience. During the televised episode Campbell and Thompson were joined by five other panellists: Allen Jacobi (2 Live Crew's lawyer), Jello Biafra (former lead singer of the Punk band Dead Kennedys), Wendy Williams (of the Punk band The Plasmatics), Mike Muir (of the Thrash band Suicidal Tendencies), and Bob

[58] O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 115-116.

DeMoss (of the nationally syndicated Christian radio show *Focus On The Family*). During the hour-long episode, Campbell asked Thompson: "Why have you singled us out? Why haven't you talked about these groups right here?"[59] Campbell referred to the three white rock artists who had also been publicly criticized for creating allegedly obscene art. Thompson answered: "I'm from Miami, the same city as Luther Campbell. And I'm embarrassed that this man in the *New York Times* today, and last night on *NBC* news, you portrayed yourself as a role model."[60] Campbell interjected with: "I'm not a role model at the jockey club. I'm a role model with kids in the community" – though he did not indicate in what regard he served as a role model.[61] Donahue interjected to explain to Thompson that Campbell was, "saying that he doesn't come from the same community you do. He doesn't speak for the same people you do."[62]

The press also contributed to this narrative of suspicion by insisting that there was a veiled undercurrent and logic of anti-black racism in anti-Rap critiques made evident by the fact that artists read as white who committed the same fouls were not held to the same standard. In Donahue's assessment of the controversy, he implied that Thompson's critique was exemplary of white men in power who wanted to manage Black populations and the (counter)-narratives they provided rather than work towards transformative change. Donahue asked Thompson:

> We have to at least be allowed to wonder whether racism is at work here. And people who are enjoying the kind of music, and the lyrics and the idiom that is being used by Rap groups want to know about the loftiness of white guys coming over the mountains to presume to save them from this evil force, when where were you when the ghettoes were falling down? Where were you when their fathers couldn't get a job because they were Black?"[63]

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[59] PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 2 of 4," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuGUHaUjRrw, uploaded May 16, 2011, video clip, *YouTube*, (accessed November 18, 2016).
[60] PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 2 of 4."
[61] PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 2 of 4."
[62] PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 2 of 4."
[63] PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 2 of 4."

Donahue then showed his audience two short clips. The first was from Madonna's 1990 "Blonde Ambition World Tour" where she simulated masturbation and sexual intercourse on a mattress while performing her 1984 single "Like A Virgin."[64] The second was Rock band Bon Jovi's 1988 music video "Living In Sin" in which actors re-enacted sexual intercourse in a series of explicit scenes.[65] Donahue asked Thompson: "If we're arresting Luther, how come not Madonna? And what is the difference? And how wavy is this line?"[66] Thompson answered that there has never been any other album that he has ever heard of that was dirtier than 2 Live Crew's.[67] Donahue's question highlighted a racial double standard in Thompson's logic: that a white woman and white band, both of whom produced live and recorded material that could be labelled as lewd, were held to a different set of standards. Donahue also questioned Thompson's impulse to exert a moral superiority (read white man's burden) over a black cultural artefact that he framed as pathological and contaminated – all the while ignoring social dislocation and urban decay. Donahue suggested that Thompson's assessment of black popular culture was informed by anthropological tropes of blackness as tainted, and his concern over Black artists was superficial and questionable at best.

Amid conversations about artistic censorship, Black intellectuals were called upon to remind the American public, as well as clarify the nuances of black culture and how it might be politically useful. For example, on June 19, 1990, Henry Louis Gates Jr. helped make meaning of the *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* album and case in a *New York Times* op-ed. Gates argued that *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* should be read as a work of literary genius that utilized African American

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[64] The Phil Donahue Show, "2 Live Crew Rappers Go To Jail For Obscenity," Transcript #2967, National Feed Date: June 13, 1990, 3-5; PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 3 of 4," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuGUHaUjRrw, uploaded May 16, 2011, video clip, *YouTube*, (accessed November 18, 2016).
[65] Bon Jovi, "Living In Sin," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI2-ASiNCac, uploaded by BonJoviVEVO on June 16, 2009, video clip, *YouTub*e (accessed November 18, 2016).
[66] PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 3 of 4."
[67]PastBeta's channel, "Donahue—Indecency & Obscenity – feat. Live Crew circa 1990, 3 of 4."

modes of performance such as "signifying" or "playing the dozens" to serve a political end.[68] He reminded audiences that for centuries, Black people had been forced to develop coded ways of communicating to protect themselves from danger. These included the use of allegory, double meaning, words defined to mean their opposites, and bawdy parody. He claimed that,

> 2 Live Crew is engaged in heavy handed parody, turning the stereotypes of Black and white American culture on their heads. These young artists are acting out, to lively dance music, a parody exaggeration of the age-old stereotypes of the oversexed Black female and male. Their exuberant use of hyperbole (phantasmagoric sexual organs, for example) undermines—for anyone fluent in Black cultural codes—a too literal-minded hearing of the lyrics.[69]

Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that when Gates framed *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* as a form of "sexual carnivalesque," he was suggesting that 2 Live Crew was using Rap to jeer at popular racist stereotypes about Black (heteronormative) male and female sexuality as promiscuous, over-sexed, lewd, and vulgar. Crenshaw argues that Gates' assessment, interesting as it might be, legitimated a public discourse that 2 Live Crew's comically extreme art should be imagined as an attempt to free American society from the pathologies of racism.[70]

The carnivalesque that Gates referred to was rooted in earlier forms of African American popular culture. With the introduction of *As Nasty As They Wanna Be,* 2 Live Crew pioneered 'dirty Rap' or 'porno Rap' – a distinctly bass-driven sound with overtly explicit and graphic lyrical content that commonly leaned towards the cartoonish or extreme offensiveness. This musical sub-genre was inspired by the comic hypersexuality in music otherwise known as the 'hokum blues.'[71]

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[68] Henry Louis Gates Jr., "2 Live Crew Decoded," *New York Times,* June 19, 1990: A23.
[69] Henry Louis Gates Jr., "2 Live Crew Decoded," *New York Times,* June 19, 1990: A23.
[70] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *The Legal Response to Violence Against Women*, ed. Karen J. Maschke (New York: Garland Pub., 1997), 138; Chuck Philips, "Appeals Court Voids Obscenity Ruling on 2 Live Crew Album," *The LA Times*, May 8, 1992; Crenshaw, "Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," 16, 6; Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," 258.
[71] The Hokum Blues (popular between the 1920s and 1940s) was a playful Blues subgenre meant for adult audiences that used double entendre, metaphor, extended analogies or euphemistic terms masked in risqué sexual innuendo and "tomfoolery" to discuss socially taboo sexual acts. Used in spoken, sung and spoofed stagecraft, gags and live

Like the hokum blues, 2 Live Crew's style used risqué sexual innuendo and boisterous and exaggerated "tomfoolery" as a comedic farce to illuminate socially taboo subjects such as sexual violence against women and the sexual objectification of female bodies.[72] This was particularly evident in the "Me So Horny" music video where rapper Brother Marquis of 2 Live Crew was filmed in a living room selecting his date's phone number from an over-sized (much like a physical copy of the whitepages) phonebook with the literal phrase "my little black book" on the cover. Marquis then dialled a phone number into a large inflatable telephone meant for children to request his date. Once his efforts to secure a date failed, he got down on his hands and knees and literally sniffed around for food to gesture to the metaphor captured in the lyrics: "I'm like a dog in heat, a freak without warning / I have an appetite for sex, cause me so horny."[73] Iton argues that Black performers included the carnivalesque in their public comedy artefacts because they were aware of the need to separate public from private transcripts less the public used these discourses against Black artists and their communities. Black performers also used the carnivalesque to challenge as well as possibly reinscribe the American racial status quo and existing racial taboos – namely those that characterized African Americans as hyper-violent and hyper-sexual.[74]

And yet, even as rappers circulated adult comedy, they did so knowing that the imagery they produced could, and likely would, generate a controversial public response and an immense amount of attention. In the case of 2 Live Crew, while the rappers were aware that their exaggerated representations of Black male sexuality would generate controversy, they also recognized that by

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routines, Hokum celebrated comedic lyrical content and a boisterous, farcical performance style. For more information see, Allan Moore, *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Alan Nadel, *August Wilson: Completing the Twentieth Century Cycle* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010).

[72] Murray Forman, "'Represent,'" 203-204.

[73] 2 Live Crew, "Me So Horny," 1989; "2 Live Crew - Me So Horny (Video)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhJ-7KIf6k8, published July 1, 2010 (accessed July 9, 2019).

[74] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 171-173.

using comedy they could capture the attention of the American public. According to Campbell, "in order to be different, we couldn't be coming like Run DMC and all of them New York rappers, so we did the adult comedy thing."[75] 2 Live Crew's use of sexually explicit words and Black comedy was also motivated by their awareness that they would be perceived as controversial. Early on in 2 Live Crew's history, the group's deejay Mr. Mixx made mixtapes of popular Rap recordings intermingled with comedic skits from Blaxploitation films like *Dolemite* (1974), and African American stand-up comics Eddie Murphy, Redd Foxx, and Richard Pryor.[76] Campbell maintains that, "our first real single, 'Trow the D[ick]' kind of started all the sex stuff, combined with the fact that Mixx and I both had a thing for comedians like Redd Foxx and Rudy Ray Moore [Dolemite]."[77] Mixx explained that their insistence on blending comedy with sexually explicit content was inspired by "having fun and reacting to the crowds."[78] Once it was time to choose a single for their 1989 album, Campbell claimed "we really chose to lead with that song because I knew that people would bug out when they heard a song called 'Me So Horny.'"[79]

As some rappers and their supporters circulated the spectre of the Black criminal and hyper-sexual male to feed discourses about carnivalesque, they also diminished and delegitimized a genuine and developing debate over toxic masculinity and sexism. This was particularly evident in Gates' analysis of the 2 Live Crew's obscenity case. Gates began by arguing that "we must not allow ourselves to sentimentalize street culture: the appreciation of verbal virtuosity does not lessen one's obligation to critique bigotry in all of its pernicious forms."[80] And yet, Gates also discounted 2 Live Crew's sexism on the grounds that the comedic farce and bawdy parody in *As*

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[75] Coleman, *Check the Technique,* 6.
[76] Coleman, *Check the Technique,* 6-7, 10.
[77] Luke "Skyywalker" Campbell as quoted in, Coleman, *Check the Technique,* 6-7, 10.
[78] David "Mr. Mixx" Hobbs as quoted in, Coleman, *Check the Technique,* 6-7, 10.
[79] Luke "Skyywalker" Campbell as quoted in, Coleman, *Check the Technique,* 6-7, 10.
[80] Gates Jr., "2 Live Crew Decoded," *New York Times,* June 19, 1990: A23.

Nasty As They Wanna Be was so exaggerated that it must not have been intended as serious. In this assessment, Gates failed to address the possibility that humour also has a power to slink towards the real and conceivable – that is sexual danger and violence. Instead, he discounted this possibility when he claimed that "their sexism is so flagrant, however, that it almost cancels itself out in a hyperbolic war between the sexes."[81] Gates rationalized that these critiques were indications that consumers were illiterate in 2 Live Crew's cultural specificity – that is, the African American vernacular tradition.[82] Gates maintained that until the public and those overseeing the ruling dealt with their illiteracy of black cultural forms, they could not adequately tackle the case's central question of obscenity.[83]

Rappers and their supporters also reasoned that these censorship incidents relied on the circulation of terrifying unbeing narratives of black sexual threat. In Gates' assessment, he drew out this critique by insinuating that the public image of 2 Live Crew as obscene was made possible by the discursive practice to draw on tropes of dangerous Black male sexuality. He asked,

> Is 2 Live Crew more 'obscene' than, say, the comic Andrew Dice Clay? Clearly, this Rap group is seen as more threatening than others that are just as sexually explicit. Can this be completely unrelated to the specter of the young Black male as a figure of sexual and social disruption, the very stereotypes 2 Live Crew seems determined to undermine? […] Censorship [was] to art what lynching [was] to justice." [84]

Here, Gates insinuated that the 2 Live Crew controversy highlighted a racial double standard and a long historical practice of labelling Black men as sexually and socially threatening. Gates maintained that when critics censored 2 Live Crew's expressions of male heteronormative desire,

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[81] Gates Jr., "2 Live Crew Decoded," *New York Times,* June 19, 1990: A23.
[82] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 138.
[83] Gates Jr., "2 Live Crew Decoded."
[84] Gates Jr., "2 Live Crew Decoded."; Andrew Dice Clay is a Jewish-American stand-up comedian who rose to prominence in the late 1980s by using the brash and macho persona of "The Diceman" and sexist humor as part of his stage show.

they were engaging in activities akin to historical anti-black vigilante practices meant to control the Black body and its expression. Gates contended that this form censorship violated Black humanity and freedom just as anti-black vigilante practices had. By invoking the language of lynching, Gates discursively reminded the public of the violence exacted on the Black male body as a result of supposed sexual misconduct. And yet, his insistence on recalling historical acts, experiences, and images of racial trauma had the effect of castigating anti-black violence against the Black male body while simultaneously silencing – both materially and discursively – sexual violence against the Black female body.

The media justified the perception that Blacks required this sort of corrective paternalism, and therefore censorship, by simultaneously mobilizing unbeing discourses of Black people as juvenile and infantile. For example, *New York Times* journalist Jon Pareles argued that 2 Live Crew's "lowbrow comedy" was "hardly a serious threat to the moral tone of the republic."[85] Pareles delegitimized anti-Rap critiques of black male sexuality as threating and terrifying by claiming that 2 Live Crew's work was "single-minded," " unsubtle," and where "sex is a big stupid slapstick joke: out of the locker room and, soon, into the courts."[86] He described their live performances as, "fully clothed men, [who] rap in simple cadences about a fairly small repertory of sex acts, gesture towards their crotches, chant bawdy parody lyrics, [and] introduce dancers clad in bras and G-strings who shimmy and display their lack of cellulite."[87] Pareles maintained that 2 Live Crew's performance was "a kind of equal opportunity degradation" where male rappers, behaving as "young boys" acting out their adolescent fantasies, portrayed themselves in an indecent light and

[85] Jon Pareles, "Raunchy Rap From 2 Live Crew: They're Rude. They're Crude. They're Lewd. And Proud of It," *New York Times,* July 20, 1990.
[86] Jon Pareles, "Raunchy Rap From 2 Live Crew."
[87] Jon Pareles, "Raunchy Rap From 2 Live Crew."

as "good for just one thing [sex]."[88] He maintained that in doing so, these artists were simultaneously constructing racialized bodies as childish buffoons and objectified sexual commodities.[89]

Like Black musicians before them, rappers used these censorship moments to suggest that state actors and elites were also terrified by white youth attraction to Rap music and the development of interracial audiences. In a September 1990 interview with *Village Voice* journalist Greg Tate, rapper Ice Cube claimed that the critics' paranoia over 2 Live Crew's art reflected their obsession over the perceived threat of inter-racialism. Cube insisted, "I think the motherfuckers don't want white kids to know about Black kids at all. I don't think they even want motherfuckers to mix."[90] Here, Ice Cube insisted upon what David Austin calls "biosexual politics" – an intense fear of the perceived or potential threat that Black people pose to the state vis-a-vis the biological and political spread of blackness through sexual encounters and Black-white solidarity. Austin maintains that this anxiety is rooted in slavery and colonialism and materializes in the recurring need to discipline and control Black bodies.[91] Cube's metatalk strengthened the fear that 2 Live Crew's popularity and controversy would introduce blackness and 'porno Rap' to white teenagers and children. His statements also reframed the 2 Live Crew controversy as a patriarchal imperative to control and dominate white children which is rooted in a white supremacist fear that Black bodies and black experiences can expose the deceptive appearance of the *duppy state* masked beneath a narrative of moral salvation.[92]

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[88] Jon Pareles, "Raunchy Rap From 2 Live Crew."
[89] Jon Pareles, "Raunchy Rap From 2 Live Crew."
[90] Greg Tate, "Manchild at Large: One-on-One With Ice Cube, Hip Hop's Most Wanted," *The Village Voice*, September 11, 1990, 77-79.
[91] For more information on Austin's theory, see, David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013).
[92] For more information on Douglas' theory, see Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Noonday Press, 1996).

In response to these discourses, various members of the music industry and American press maintained that these censorship incidents were rooted in ongoing and destructive anti-black impulses meant to scapegoat and destroy Black youth. On June 22, 1990, a substantial group of music industry executives, artists and members of the press authored a letter. In the document, Bill Adler, SOUL Records' Bill Stephney, Profile Records' Dan Charnas, and Island Records' Sandy Sawotka argued that the paranoia over 2 Live Crew obscenity's case required a firm response from the band's supporters. These industry insiders stated:

> We see the attack on 2 Live Crew as the latest in an escalating series of attacks on the arts by the religious right. We also see it as part of an ongoing campaign against Black youth – and young Black men, in particular – designed to scapegoat them all for America's laundry list of social ills, and then destroy them. Sound farfetched? No less a figure than Louis W. Sullivan, President Bush's Health & Human Services Secretary, he said: "I do not think it is an exaggeration to suggest the young Black American male is a species in danger."[93]

Four days later, Adler, Stephney, Charnas, and Sawotka organized a New York City press conference to pledge support for 2 Live Crew. Roughly 150 people were in attendance from the music and art industries, major media outlets and various left-wing political groups. The event provided a space for supporters to hear statements and speeches of defense. Speakers included Tommy Boy Records CEO Tom Silverman, Def Jam Records President Carmen Ashhurst-Watson, National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences representative Stu Ginsberg, *Rock 'N' Roll Confidential* editor Dave Marsh, and flag desecration artist Dread Scott. At the press conference, Adler explained that the 2 Live Crew controversy was a "kind of cultural warfare" that highlighted, "widespread feelings of alarm, […] that all of us in the arts must do something to combat this pernicious censorship."[94]

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[93] Bill Adler, "Diggin' In the Files: 2 Live Crew," http://www.crazyhood.com/diggin-files-2-live-crew-bill-adler/ (accessed on October 15, 2014).
[94] Bill Adler as quoted in, J. The Sultan, "2 Live Crew Update," 16.

By mid-June 1990, mainstream Black Civil Rights leadership added a class and generational dimension to the censorship debate that foreshadowed the intra-racial dispute over Rap's political usefulness explored in the subsequent chapter. This dynamic was particularly evident on June 20th when the NAACP broke their silence. Executive director Benjamin L. Hooks stated, "our cultural experience does not include debasing our women, the glorification of violence, the promotion of deviant sexual behaviour or the tearing into shreds of our cherished mores and standards of behaviour."[95] *Wall Street Journal* journalist Leon E. Wynter argued that Hooks' statement reflected a fundamental disagreement within 'the black community' over whether 2 Live Crew's lyrics legitimately reflected the black cultural experience. He claimed,

> Many middle-class Blacks identify strongly with values they link to upward mobility—family, work, and faith. They say they are put off by the celebration of values from the streets, including violence and exploitation of women, that inform much of Rap music. And they have been indifferent, at best, to 2 Live Crew's call for support of what the Rap group claims to be an African American art form. […an NAACP spokesperson] took offense at his [Campbell] attributing these sentiments to Black culture and wrapping it in the mantle of Black tradition. [96]

Sociologist Nathan Hare told Wynter that he was squeamish at the thought of 2 Live Crew's lawyer Bruce Rogrow arguing in court that the use of the term 'bitch' is a cultural norm for African Americans. He claimed, "it's not Black art, it's art that some young Black people are practicing now."[97] In his presentation of a class-based and generational debate within African American circles, Wynter hinted at how the Black middle class was firmly defining what constituted African American culture, and thereby disassociating themselves from the perceived pathologies of the Black working and workless poor.

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[95] Benjamin L. Hooks as quoted in, Leon E. Wynter, "NAACP Raps 2 Live Crew, Reflecting Division Among Blacks Over the Music," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 21, 1990.
[96] Leon E. Wynter, "NAACP Raps 2 Live Crew, Reflecting Division Among Blacks Over the Music."
[97] Nathan Hare as quoted in, Leon E. Wynter, "NAACP Raps 2 Live Crew, Reflecting Division Among Blacks Over the Music."

Despite ongoing debates over 2 Live Crew's material, sales of *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* continued to increase as did the number of arrests across the country for the album's sale. In the first six days after the ruling, Fort Lauderdale record store owner Charles Freeman was arrested after selling the album to an undercover police officer. 2 Live Crew members Luke Campbell and Chris "Fresh Kid Ice" Wongwon were also arrested in Hollywood (Florida) following a live performance of their material. And in San Antonio, Texas, police warned record storeowners that if they sold the album, they risked arrest.[98] In a July 2, 1990 *Newsweek* report, journalist Tom Mathews reported that a Gallup poll found that 75% of Americans did not want anyone imposing new laws on what they could consume even as 71% of Americans believed that obscenity had increased in the arts. Seventy-eight percent of the American public also thought that parents should do more to protect their children from these cultural artefacts.[99] And yet, despite this vigorous public debate, 2 Live Crew's album remained popular and profitable. According to the *New York Times*, by June 1990 *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* had sold 1.7 million copies.[100]

On May 7, 1992, nearly two years after ongoing debates about *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* were launched, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit in Atlanta overturned Judge Gonzalez's ruling. Wynter reported that the appellate court stated that, "the Sheriff has failed to carry his burden of proof that the material is obscene by the Miller standards under that less stringent standard. Thus, to reverse the declatory judgement that the work is obscene, we need not decide which of the standards applies."[101] The court determined that the pro-

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[98] J. The Sultan, "2 Live Crew Update," 16.
[99] Tom Mathews, "Fine Art or Foul? In Galleries, Theatres, Congress and the Courts, a Battle Over Freedom of Expression is Raging," *Newsweek*, July 2, 1990, 48.
[100] Jon Pareles, "A Rap Group's Lyrics Venture Close to the Edge of Obscenity," C15.
[101] Luke Records, Inc., a Florida Corporation Formerly Known As Skyywalker Records, Inc., et al., Plaintiffs-appellants, v. Nick Navarro, Sheriff, Broward County, Florida, Defendant-appellee, 960 F.2d 134 (11th Cir. May 7 1992); For more information on the Miller Test, see, Lee Rainwater, *Social Problems and Public Policy: Deviance and Liberty* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1974); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism

censorship side of the debate had not provided a case for censorship. First, "the Sheriff put in no evidence other than the cassette tape. [And] he called no expert witnesses concerning contemporary community standards, prurient interest, or serious artistic value."[102]

As rappers presented a public case for resisting calls for censorship, they called on various expert witnesses to affirm the value of their artwork. The plaintiffs-appellants (lawyers Bruce Rogrow and Allen Jacobi) called psychologist Mary Haber, and music critics Gregory Baker, John Leland, and Rhodes Scholar Carlton Long to confirm that the material had artistic merit, social value, and met community standards. Dr. Haber argued that 2 Live Crew's album did not appeal to the average person's prurient interest. Baker and Leland testified that 2 Live Crew were Rap innovators and their music should, therefore, be regarded as possessing serious musical value.[103] Long testified that the album was unique to Southeastern African-American culture and must be considered in its cultural context.[104] Long would later co-write an article with Robert T. Perry where he maintained that 2 Live Crew's music belonged to a "highly particularized sociological 'culture' – the culture of some African Americans growing up jobless in the socially and economically desolate Liberty City 'ghetto' of Miami."[105] In his testimony, Long argued that the music contained three African American oral traditions (call and response, playing the dozens, and boasting), political significance, five literary conventions (alliteration, allusion, metaphor, rhyme, and personification), and reflected the lived experiences of urban African Americans. Aside from

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and 2 Live Crew," *Boston Review*, December 1, 1991; Richard D. Barnet and Larry L. Burriss, *Controversies of the Music Industry* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001).

[102] Luke Records, Inc., a Florida Corporation Formerly Known As Skyywalker Records, Inc., et al., Plaintiffs-appellants, v. Nick Navarro, Sheriff, Broward County, Florida, Defendant-appellee, 960 F.2d 134 (11th Cir. May 7, 1992).

[103] Luke Records, Inc., et al., v. Nick Navarro, 960 F.2d 134 (11th Cir. May 7, 1992).

[104] Luke Records, Inc., et al., v. Nick Navarro, 960 F.2d 134 (11th Cir. May 7, 1992); O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 118.

[105] Robert T. Perry and Carlton Long, *Obscenity Law, Hip Hop Music and 2 Live Crew*, N.Y. L.J., July 20, 1990, at 6, col. 1; O'Gallagher, "2 Live Crew and Judge Gonzalez Too - 2 Live Crew and the Miller Obscenity Test; Note," 118.

these testimonies, the court determined that "the case was tried by a judge without a jury, and he relied on his expertise as to the community standard and artistic prongs of the Miller Test."[106] The appellate court found that the relevant community (those living in Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach counties) had "a more tolerant view of obscene speech than would other communities within the state."[107]

2 Live Crew viewed this ruling as both a civil rights triumph for Black Americans and evidence that Rap was politically useful by way of testing the limits of First Amendment rights. Campbell argued that this ruling "let black folks know that the First Amendment really does apply to us," and that it was possible to overcome "a racially tinged decision."[108] Campbell contended that the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision "says we [African Americans] can speak our minds the same way that white people do. This isn't just a victory for 2 Live Crew. The entire music industry won big on this one."[109] By mobilizing race to equate 2 Live Crew's final verdict to a civil rights victory, Campbell attempted to convince African Americans that their quest for freedom of speech represented an instance where the oppressed were victorious against their oppressor. This narrative presented Black men in two capacities: first, as victims of a racist justice system, and second as torchbearers, who used an instance of oppression to lobby on behalf of African Americans. In Campbell's assessment, 2 Live Crew's First Amendment victory was won by using their fleeting and precarious access to patriarchy and pointing out the cultural illiteracy and racial anxieties of their detractors. The result was a music industry victory, as well as the broader justification of anti-woman language and sexist and misogynistic behavior. In this scenario, women

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[106] Luke Records, Inc., et al., v. Nick Navarro, 960 F.2d 134 (11th Cir. May 7, 1992).
[107] Luke Records, Inc., et al., v. Nick Navarro, 960 F.2d 134 (11th Cir. May 7, 1992).
[108] Chuck Philips, "Appeals Court Voids Obscenity Ruling on 2 Live Crew Album," *The LA Times*, May 8, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-05-08/news/mn-1911_1_live-crew (accessed October 14, 2014).
[109] Philips, "Appeals Court Voids Obscenity Ruling on 2 Live Crew Album."

– particularly Black women – paid the cost as their voices were silenced and Black men exploited their bodies to make a point about their race and gender specific oppression.

"I'm About To Dust Some Cops Off": The Case Against Ice T

On March 10, 1992, the all-black Rap-Metal band Body Count released its self-titled debut album featuring the recording "Cop Killer." Written in 1990 by the band's lead vocalist rapper Ice T, "Cop Killer" was framed as a fictional narrative and protest record that highlighted the malevolent point of view of an individual who was outraged by the nature of American policing. The song included a two-pronged revenge narrative: the record's protagonist describes a desire to settle the score with police following the Rodney King incident, and the killings of countless other African American men.[110] The song documented what happened when police brutality went unchecked, and an average American citizen turned to vigilante justice as the answer. According to band members, "Cop Killer" was inspired, in part, by the 1977 record "Psycho Killer" by the New Wave band Talking Heads. This recording captured the innermost thoughts of a serial killer. Ice-T argued that "Cop Killer" was intended as, "a warning, not a threat—to authority that says, 'Yo, police: We're human beings. Treat us accordingly.'"[111] He claimed that "Cop Killer" was not a call to murder police, but a description of the anger that existed in racialized communities as a result of police harassment and punitive surveillance.[112]

By the early 1990s, rappers used records like "Cop Killer" to publicly discuss anti-black ecosystems, police brutality and the militarization of the criminal justice system in politically

[110] Body Count, "Cop Killer," 1992, *Body Count* (Sire/Warner Bros., WEA-1541, 1992).
[111] Ice T and Heidi Sigmund, *The Ice Opinion: Who Gives a Fuck?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 99–101, 108, 166–180; Jon Pareles, "The Disappearance of Ice T's Cop Killer," *New York Times*, July 30, 1992 (National Edition), C13, C16.
[112] Chuck Philips, "Ice-T Pulls 'Cop Killer' Off the Market," *The LA Times*, July 29, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-07-29/news/mn-4656_1_cop-killer (accessed October 14, 2014).

useful ways. According to Body Count's lead guitarist Ernie Cunnigan, "Cop Killer" provided artists and the public with a platform to discuss police brutality amid the Rodney King controversy. On March 3, 1991, following a high-speed chase, members of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) were captured on witness video beating African American taxi driver Rodney King. The footage, which was later sent to local news station KTLA, raised public concern over the brutal architectures of policing in Los Angeles. Four officers were later charged with assault with a deadly weapon and use of excessive force. The jury acquitted three officers of all charges and acquitted the fourth officer of assault with a deadly weapon but failed to reach a verdict on his use of excessive force. Scholars and media have argued that the acquittals triggered the 1992 L.A Riots which left 53 people dead, 2,383 injured, 8,000 arrested, and $1 billion in property damage.[113] "Cop Killer" granted audiences insight into a climactic point in American race relations, as well as the deep hostilities among poor and working class sectors of the African American community towards law enforcement. The Department of Justice reported that between 1986 and 1992, 47,000 cases of police brutality were reported – only 15,000 of which were investigated and 128 of which were selected for prosecution.[114] George Lipsitz argues that by the latter 1980s, incidents of police brutality towards African Americans and the failure to prosecute was a nationwide problem.[115]

Many black Angelenos rappers used their medium to discuss the pressure and terror that racialized communities experienced at the hands of the *duppy state*.[116] Robin D.G. Kelley argues

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[113] For more information on the LA Riots, see, Bryan John McCann, "Contesting the Mark of Criminality: Resistance and Ideology in Gangsta Rap, 1988-1997." Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, August 2009, and Lou Cannon, *Official Negligence: How Rodney King and the Riots Changed Los Angeles and the LAPD* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999).

[114] George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press), 169.

[115] Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark*, 169.

[116] Robin D.G. Kelley argues that Gangsta Rap was characterized by a funk-sample sound; gang-related modes of dress; playing (and increasing the volume of) recordings beyond the parameters of private space; signifying practice and thick description; exaggerated and invented boasts of criminal acts that borrowed from the template of the baadman [sic] tales of the late nineteenth century, blaxploitation, pimp narratives and urban toasts; and forcibly inserting a

that by the mid-to-late 1980s, Los Angeles' black working and workless poor in neighbourhoods such as Watts, Compton, and South Central were transformed into militarized "war zones" and primary sites for the War on Drugs project.[117] Black Angelenos – especially those living in housing projects – were constantly monitored by police helicopters and complex electronic surveillance. They were also required to carry identity cards, encircled by fortified fencing and a LAPD substation. Many Black Angelenos bore witness to small tanks armed with battering rams rolling through their streets and homes as part of Los Angeles' policing strategy. Many of these neighbourhoods were renovated along the lines of minimum security prisons and subjected to rising police brutality as a mode by which to manage and corral bodies in the name of "law and order."[118] Kelley argues that Rap – especially Gangsta Rap – mobilized the metaphor of gangster to deconstruct dominant discourses about criminality that were applied to the powerless. Rappers re-assigned this moniker of 'gangster' to the powerful to demonstrate how these authorities extracted power on the dispossessed through the threat of violence and disorder. Rappers used this discursive strategy to indict the elite – namely, those who strove to control their lives as in the case of politicians, the state and police departments – as criminal.[119] Kelley argues that Gangsta Rap recordings of the late 1980s and early 1990s were replete with references to the criminality of police, as well as mentions of American settler colonialism and imperialism (as in the case of the CIA facilitating the drug trade, wars in Latin America and the Middle East, or the theft of land from indigenous communities). Rappers used their medium to suggest that urban spaces were an

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'Gangsta Rap mentality' in public discourse. For more on Gangsta Rap, see, Robin D.G Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and Postindustrial Los Angeles," in *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap and Hip Hop Culture*, ed. William Eric Perkins (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 119-120, 134, and Forman, "'Represent,'" 78-79.

[117] Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics," 122-124.

[118] Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics," 122-124, 131; Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (New York, NY: Verso, 1990): 269-270.

[119] Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics," 130-132.

'arena of experience' where tensions between structure and agency and the construction of Black youth as criminalized became clear.[120]

In the wake of the L.A. Riot, public characterizations of 'Gangsta Rap' as criminal intersected with existent discourses that centered questions of social order and depravity in even more profound ways. Ruth Gilmore argues that the 1992 Los Angeles riots occurred within the context of an economic crash, a recession, job loss (730,000 in total), the shift from high wage to low-wage employment in the manufacturing and service sector, and the deepening desire among grassroots activists to combat police brutality. [121] In public anecdotes about Los Angeles residents affected by these transformations, the media, government officials and policy advisers endlessly referred to "the public concern" in discourses over crime, prisons, the desire for social order and "deviant behavior." Gilmore argues that these anecdotes typically centered poor non-white communities as the cause for concern. [122]

Some scholars argue that despite the impact of race and racism in shaping the behaviours and contexts in and around the L.A. Riot, the media coded this incident as beyond race. Christopher Sieving maintains that the media coded the L.A. Riot, its immediate context and rioter behavior as "beyond rational explanation." He suggests that in doing so, journalists produced a discourse of de-racialization that recoded the L.A Riot (and the African Americans who participated) as an event beyond race rather that an incident deeply shaped by anti-black ecosystems, sentiments and discourses. Sieving suggests that these narratives were paired with and reinvigorated by the public desire to imagine the black working class and the urban spaces they inhabited as pathological,

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[120] Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics," 122, 124, 130-132; Murray, "'Represent,'" 88. For more information on the role of Rap in addressing indigenous issues and settler colonialism, see, Kyle T. Mays, "Decolonial Hip Hop: Indigenous Hip Hop and the Disruption of Settler Colonialism," *Cultural Studies* 33:3 (2019): 460-479.
[121] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 50.
[122] Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 18-19.

irrational and hyper-violent. The press then turned to rappers, whom they believed to be urban spokespeople, to decode and contextualize the attitudes and behaviors of urban black America to the white mainstream.[123] Perhaps another way of reading what Sieving has described as "de-racialization" was that state actors and other holders of power were not eliminating race from the conversation but re-directing the conversation. Rather than take seriously the real violence experienced in Black communities at the hands of police, powerbrokers chose to focus on and prioritize the imagined violence against police (read the state). These discourses demonstrated how the lives of African Americans were not prioritized, considered of equal value, or of value at all.

In the aftermath of the Rodney King beating, Body Count began openly defending their "Cop Killer" recording and contextualizing their critique of policing. Cunnigan maintained that,

> 'Cop Killer' was written right after Rodney King [and released in 1992] and all [when] everybody [was] looking at [the police] like they [were] bad guys, right? And they are, some of them. Not all, but certain ones. So then we come along, and they [critics] say, 'These guys are talking about killing.'[124]

Cunnigan claimed that when Body Count released "Cop Killer" critics of the record attempted to distort the nature of their critique.[125] Media, police associations and politicians condemned the record for its narrative of killing cops. These gatekeepers also argued that Body Count's interpretation of the events that led to the L.A. Riots – namely, the Rodney King incident and the broader nature of policing and surveilling blackness in urban spaces – was problematic. Cunnigan contended that Body Count's critics believed that Time Warner (the band's distribution company) was purposely using the L.A. Riot to capitalize upon their investment in the band. Cunnigan refuted

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[123] Christopher Sieving, "Cop Out? The Media, 'Cop Killer,' and the Deracialization of Black Rage," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 22 Issue 4 (1998): 340.
[124] J.D. Considine, "Despite 'Cop Killer,' Body Count Racks Up Peaceful Performances," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 14, 1992, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-12-14/features/1992349104_1_body-count-cop-killer-count-album
[125] Considine, "Despite 'Cop Killer."

the accusation. He argued that, "that was untrue. The record was written and released before [the LA Riots]."[126]

The "Cop Killer" controversy reflected ongoing white fear and paranoia over blackness as threat, as well as the consistent ability among Black public figures to respond to these discourses and reframe where the real threat of racialized violence emanated from. This was perhaps most evident in an episode of *The Phil Donahue Show* featuring Minister Louis Farrakhan who spoke with audience members about the state of race relations in America. During the episode, a number of white audience members indicated that when they thought about Black people and the spaces that they occupied, they felt endangered and the threat of imminent violence. In the question and answer segment, one white woman stated, "I was brought up in 'Bedford-Stuyvesant' in my time, but I would like to say what scares us, is I think, what we hear is violence."[127] To which Farrakhan responded,

> The young lady said she's afraid of violence. And isn't it sad that we who have been the victims of so much violence, now whites fear violence from us. We do not have a history of killing white people. White people have a history of killing us. See, and what, and what you fear, …may I say this sir? What you fear is a deep guilt thing that white folks suffer. You are afraid that if we ever come to power we will do to you and your fathers what you and your people have done to us. And I think you are judging us by the state of your own mind and that is not necessarily the mind of Black people.[128]

Here, Farrakhan conveyed what Kenneth Ramchand refers to as "terrified consciousness" wherein, in the afterlives of slavery, white people's state of consciousness exemplified a fear that once Black

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[126] Alan Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political," *Rolling Stone*, August 20, 1992 (Issue 637), http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-rolling-stone-interview-ice-t-19920820 (accessed September 17, 2014).
[127] IRONMUHAMMAD68, "Minister Farrakhan on Donahue 1990," *YouTube* video published on March 10, 2015, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.youtube.com/watch?v%3DWM2f1c3Jsgw&source=gmail&ust=1559224038394000&usg=AFQjCNG4mE6AWclx_pZSQ6p8NjNCrMQrdw (accessed May 28, 2019). The original interview (titled "Minister Louis Farrakhan Part II") was aired on *The Phil Donahue Show* (episode number 031490) on March 13, 1990 – three days after the release of Body Count's record.
[128] IRONMUHAMMAD68, "Minister Farrakhan on Donahue 1990."

people were free and cognizant of their power they would take retribution for the anti-Black violence perpetrated by the planter class.[129] While Ramachand's version of terrified consciousness reflected a Caribbean context wherein whites were the minority, Farrakhan's observation suggested that this state of consciousness occurred whether the formerly enslaved were in the majority or minority. Farrakhan pointed to this state of conscious as an outcome and condition of the afterlives of slavery irrespective of the real or imagined demographic presence and power of Black people. This interview, which was part of a two-part interview with the Minister, was later sampled in rapper Ice Cube's 1992 album *The Predator* on an interlude titled "I'm Scared." Ice Cube used the sample to discuss the construction of Black men as predatorial and the ongoing fear among white people of violence at the hands of Black people.[130]

Farakhan's point here helps us think through the nature of Chuck D's 'Terrordome' and what states of consciousness, particularly among white Americans, tell us about the American public's inability to confront Black responses to the *duppy state*. First, Farrakhan's observation highlighted that the levels of violence that Blacks were met with in the United States was disproportionate to what they could actually do given that they were a demographic minority with little to no political, economic or discursive power to speak of. Farrakhan suggested that this state of white consciousness was born of guilt that was rooted in an understanding that the unfair and brutal architectures of white supremacy might one day be answered. Farrakhan's response to his white critics highlighted the depth and power of discourses about Black criminality produced vis-à-vis terrified consciousness insofar as these discourses supplanted what was real and possible. This 'nightmare' was made worse in the minds of those with that terrified consciousness because they recognized that this violence was deserved. It might also be possible to argue that in the minds

[129] Kenneth Ramchand, "Terrified Consciousness," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 4:1 (1969): 9.
[130] Ice Cube, "I'm Scared," 1992, *The Predator* (Priority Records, P1 57185, November 17, 1992).

of those with terrified consciousness, the imagined threat of Black violence and the ongoing anti-Black actions of whites throughout American history were not the only terrors whites needed to confront. Whites also needed to wrestle with what they were capable of and what their possible actions indicated about their (in)'humanity.' That is, the very act of seeing themselves *was* terrifying. And so, as whites came to grips with the knowledge that any Black retribution was deserved, they also understood that they could not afford to know this truth and admit their culpability. The outcome of this rejection was the ongoing denial of Black being among white people, and their decision to distract themselves by spinning discourses that justified the next step – the application of terror. In these instances, discourse production served as distraction as well as avoidance and denial. This process allowed those with terrified consciousness to comfortably project the threat of violence outwards rather than admit the authorship (and true perpetrators) of violence.

In the context of the L.A. Riot and ongoing abuse of police power, Black musicians mobilized Rap's political usefulness to insist that America was defined by at least two distinct racial realities. Ice T argued that in the early 1990s, he would watch the Los Angeles Sunday night news in amazement as newscasters tallied up the Black youth killed week after week and then immediately segued to sports. He would ask himself, "is that all I am, […] a body count?"[131] This experience inspired the band's name and reminded Ice T that Black life was disproportionately subjected to police and gang violence. He noted that in the (white) public imagination, this level of anti-black violence was neither alarming nor problematic. Ice T argued that Black life was not valuable, and this angered African Americans because it appeared that privileged Americans had no understanding of what it meant to be impacted by ongoing gang violence, police profiling and

[131] Ice T and Sigmund, *The Ice Opinion: Who Gives a Fuck?*, 99–101, 108, 166–180.

brutality, surveillance, and mass incarceration. Ice T maintained that, "If you ain't really been fucked over by the police, you can't have the same hatred, [and] if you're looking to understand the anger […], you never will unless you live it."[132]

After the release of "Cop Killer," the Combined Law Enforcement Association of Texas (CLEAT) called for direct action against Ice T and an economic boycott of Time Warner. On June 10, 1992 CLEAT came forward and argued that "Cop Killer" condoned the killing of police officers. CLEAT demanded that the $12 billion conglomerate disassociate itself from the song, remove the album from stores and apologize to officers nationwide.[133] Within a week the New York Patrolman's Benevolent Association, the Boston Police Patrolman's Association, members of Congress, the National Rifle Association and Oliver North's Freedom Alliance publicly supported CLEAT's position.[134] *The Baltimore Sun's* Mike Royko reported that police associations across the country mailed in protest letters to Warner Brothers Records in response to "Cop Killer." In a similar version sent by members of the Chicago police department, police wrote,

> We, as members of the Chicago Police Department and members of their families, are appalled and offended that you and your company are willing to promote the Ice T song called 'Cop Killer.' We are urging you to remove this song from the record stores and the media. Until such time, we intend to boycott any and all products, movies and amusement parks, […]. [And] if you continue to promote this song, rest assured that you will be held liable and accountable for officers that are killed, as a result of subjects using this song as a plea in their defense.[135]

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[132] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."

[133] In 1992 CLEAT was the largest law enforcement officers' union in Texas. The organization began in the mid-1970s after a group of officers, many of whom were Vietnam veterans, formed their own union to represent street police. For more information on CLEAT, see, "History of CLEAT," *CLEAT: Strength, Justice, Unity*, https://www.cleat.org/history-cleat/ (accessed December 4 2016).

[134] Philips, "Ice-T Pulls 'Cop Killer' Off the Market,"; Michael Nevin Willard, *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-century America* (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 401–402; Jon Pareles, "The Disappearance of Ice T's Cop Killer," New York Times (National Edition), July 30 1992, C13, C16.

[135] Mike Royko, "The Profit Motive Lifts the Lid on Garbage," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 30, 1992, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-06-30/features/1992182163_1_cop-killer-time-warner-rap-song (accessed September 14, 2014).

And yet, while media coverage suggested that police sentiment was uniform, police opinion did vary according to race.

Evidence suggested that police opinion of "Cop Killer" and the indictments of rappers regarding police brutality among Black police offers was not as simplistic and that their sentiments made space for a critique of power. Both the National Black Police Association (NBPA) based in Washington, and the Los Angeles-based African American Police Officers Association opposed the boycott, citing the right to free speech. In an official statement, the NBPA stated that Ice T, "[was] entitled to voice his anger and frustration with the conditions facing oppressed people."[136] Black officers from both organizations identified police brutality as the primary reason for anti-police sentiment. The NBPA proposed the creation of an independent civilian review board to scrutinize law enforcement actions. They believed that this board would help bring an end to brutal policing.[137] Like some of the feedback from Black law enforcement during the 2 Live Crew controversy, Black officers similarly argued that "Cop Killer" was an artistic attempt to render the architectures of policing visible to non-Black and non-brown communities. According to an *Entertainment Weekly* poll, Black police officers were not alone in their support of the recording. Data indicated that only 34 percent of African Americans were angry with Ice T for the recording. By comparison, 60 percent of non-blacks were incensed over "Cop Killer."[138]

In a presidential election year, many politicians also decided to appraise the political usefulness of Rap records that unapologetically called the *duppy state* into view and provided a critique of the nation. Like the 2 Live Crew controversy, politicians also weighed in on the "Cop Killer" debate. Many of these state actors were also up for office during the 1992 presidential

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[136] Jon Pareles, "The Disappearance of Ice T's Cop Killer," C13, C16.
[137] Willard, *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-century America*, 401–402.
[138] "Is Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' Legal?" *Entertainment Weekly*, August 14 1992, http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,311415,00.html (accessed January 17, 2019).

election year. Such was the case with President George H. W. Bush, who nearly five months prior to election day stated that Body Count was "sick" to produce a record that glorified the killing of police officers.[139] Vice President Dan Quayle also commented on the controversy. He told the press that, "here is a very influential corporation, supporting and making money off a record that suggests it's okay to kill cops. I find that outrageous."[140] Quayle repeatedly chastised executives for marketing "obscene" entertainment for profit. He contended that the recording ran counter to America's "traditional" values in that police officers were often praised for the risks they took.[141] By the end of June 1992, 60 members of Congress – most of them Republicans – echoed Quayle's critique in a letter to Time Warner. These politicians labeled Time Warner's affiliation with "Cop Killer" despicable.[142] When *Rolling Stone's* Alan Light asked Ice T how it felt to be criticized by American politicians, he explained that he had clearly underestimated his influence and the degree to which he could anger politicians. He also suggested that the public conversations about "Cop Killer," and Gangsta Rap more broadly, were deliberate public relations attempts to frame blackness in a particular way during a presidential race.[143]

In a racially polarizing period, politicians commenting on anti-policing Rap records in an election year read as deliberate and strategic efforts to stoke historically rooted discourses of Black pathology and criminality. Journalists and music executives argued that politicians participated in the "Cop Killer" backlash to appeal to conservative voters, circulate discourses of Black

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[139] Sheila Rule, "Rapping Time Warner's Knuckles," *New York Times* (National Edition), July 8 1992, C16; Jon Pareles, "Dissing the Rappers is Fodder for the Sound Bite," *New York Times* (National Edition), June 28 1992.
[140] Knight-Ridder News Service, "Quayle Raps Rapper's 'Cop Killer,' Calls Ice T's Recording 'Outrageous,' Vice President 'Doesn't Get It,' Record Firm Says," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 23, 1992, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-06-23/news/1992175130_1_spiro-agnew-president-spiro-t-cop-killer (accessed September 14 2014).
[141] Chuck Philips, "The Uncivil War: The Battle Between the Establishment and Supporters of Rap Music Reopens Old Wounds of Race and Class," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-07-19/entertainment/ca-4391_1_uncivil-war (accessed September 14 2014).
[142] Rule, "Rapping Time Warner's Knuckles," C16; Pareles, "Dissing the Rappers is Fodder for the Sound Bite."
[143] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."

criminality, and add to the existent paranoia that flowed from long-standing narratives of blackness as threat. Chuck Philips of the *Los Angeles Times* argued that Vice President Dan Qualye's critique of Ice T and his lyrics was a transparent political exercise. He stated,

> From Bill Clinton to Dan Quayle, politicians have introduced the messages of militant rappers, many of whom were unknown to the great mass of voters, to the national debate. Some critics see the worst sort of political cynicism at work: […] for Quayle, going after Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' was Willie Horton II, a not-so-subtle reinforcement of the stereotype of the criminal Black male.[144]

Jeff Ayeroff, co-chairman of Virgin Records and co-founder of the recording industry's *Rock the Vote* voter registration campaign, echoed Phillip's indictment. Ayeroff argued that the White House's critiques suggested that they were in the business of exploiting the fear of a supposedly potent Black artist to their own political advantage.[145] To this conversation, Ice T added, "Why, now, all of a sudden in 1992, the minute a Black man puts out a song with the slightest revolutionary message, does everybody want to silence you? Can't these jokers find anything more important to base a political platform on?"[146]

Even as high-ranking politicians used this debate to frame their talking points, their interpretations of "Cop Killer" reflected contrarian knowledge of policing and the use of law and order than that of their Black constituents. The public conversation over "Cop Killer" highlighted two radically different understandings of police encounters in the United States. First, most American politicians critiquing the record did not share the same experiential knowledge of police-community interactions, or the commonplace narrative of police as aggressors and violent perpetrators. Instead, their critiques were informed by a set of heroic narratives where police existed to "serve and protect." These critics often framed the power of law enforcement as an

[144] Philips, "The Uncivil War."
[145] Philips, "The Uncivil War."
[146] Philips, "The Uncivil War."

example of fundamental goodness. Second, when these politicians publicly challenged, and in some cases negated Ice T's narrative, their critique concealed the brutal architectures of policing in Black communities.

In these public debates over anti-police Rap lyricism, critics also directed their anger towards the record labels for financially supporting and profiting from the distribution of Rap messaging that was supposedly anti-American in its value system. Such was the case on July 16, 1992, when approximately 100 protesters descended on Time Warner's annual shareholders' meeting to protest Time Warner's support of "Cop Killer." Led by CLEAT's director Mark Clark, the protestors consisted of officers from several police groups, the family members of slain officers, actor Charlton Heston [then president of the National Rifle Association (NRA)] and Heston's legal advisor Jack Thompson (of the 2 Live Crew controversy).[147] At the event CLEAT President Ron DeLord called Time Warner irresponsible murderers, and claimed that, "what we're talking about here are corporate executives who hide behind the American flag and the First Amendment so [that] they can profit off the advocation of police murder."[148] Following the meeting, members of the Law Enforcement Alliance of America (LEAA) told the press that Time Warner had rebuffed their request to suspend their support of "Cop Killer." LEAA President and Memphis police lieutenant Brenda Maples publicly stated, "Time Warner has said [that] they are the unmovable object. They refused to give in. […] We have no [other] alternative but to continue to be the irresistible force."[149] Oliver North of the Freedom Alliance later told the press, "what we have here is a bunch of businessmen who have irresponsibly decided to make money on products

[147] Rule, "Rapping Time Warner's Knuckles"; Philips, "Ice-T Pulls 'Cop Killer' Off the Market."
[148] Phillips, "The Uncivil War."
[149] "Time Warner Gets Protest on Its 'Cop Killer' Album," *New York Times* (National Edition), July 16 1992, C17.

that threaten lives and encourage the kinds of anarchy that you folks in Los Angeles have just been through. The people who put this stuff out must be held accountable."[150]

Amid accusations that the music industry only affirmed and promoted controversial messaging to exploit Black artists for their own financial gain, music label executives came forward to defend their choice to stand behind Rap artists. Following CLEAT's indictment of mass media and entertainment personnel for promoting Body Count's record as part of a profiteering agenda, various media conglomerate executives stepped out to defend Time Warner. CEO of Capitol/EMI Music Inc. Joe Smith argued that entertainment companies did not have a hidden agenda to undermine the traditional values of American society and profiteer from obscenity. He minimized the potential profit – citing that the money Time Warner stood to make from "Cop Killer" was insignificant in that the record sold fewer than a few hundred thousand copies. He claimed that entertainment executives had moral values and any accusation of profiteering was both arrogant and ludicrous.[151] He argued that this was a matter of free speech and principle.[152] Al Teller, chairman of MCA Music Entertainment Group, echoed Smith's argument. He contended that music executives were ardent supporters of the First Amendment and for "anyone to take the position that [they] have some kind of calculated agenda to force-feed the American public a particular point of view, it's patent nonsense."[153]

The "Cop Killer" controversy revealed that when seeming allies mobilized freedom of speech narratives in defense of rappers, public attention shifted away from the politically trenchant critique that rappers had initially referenced in their record. As "Cop Killer" supporters used freedom of speech to explain the song's existence, they also delegitimized and concealed Body

[150] Philips, "The Uncivil War."
[151] Phillips, "The Uncivil War."
[152] Phillips, "The Uncivil War."
[153] Phillips, "The Uncivil War."

Count's critique of racist policing, the carceral state and the ongoing animation of the *duppy state*. As Time Warner accumulated allies in the media, civil liberties groups and the recording industry, the company's executives increasingly argued that they supported "Cop Killer" because they believed in an artist's right to the First Amendment. Time Warner executives contended that they were merely endorsing Ice T's right to articulate his point of view. However, Time Warner's public defense of Ice T did not appear to equate to an act of support of his interpretation of Los Angeles' policing ecosystems. Sieving argues that this distinction is important in that the act of recoding "Cop Killer" as the product of unethical business practices and freedom of speech effectively disarticulated Ice T's b(l)ack looking. Along with Time Warner executives, the police also strategically deployed this dominant articulation of business ethics and free speech to undermine Body Count's reading of the carceral state. [154]

As state actors, media and corporate elites circulated free speech and described away Rap's b(l)ack looking, they bolstered the invisible circulation of white power. Sieving contends that Time Warner, police organizations, and supporting mass media and entertainment executives engaged in the strategy of "corporatization" – that is, the transference of blame for "Cop Killer's" potential threat to the American moral fabric from Body Count to the company that distributed the record.[155] Sieving maintains that this transference framed the controversy as a matter of corporate ethics rather than a legitimate expression of Black rage towards anti-black policing and surveillance as a social engineering strategy. By using "corporatization," Time Warner, police organizations, and entertainment executives framed Body Count's message as irresponsibly dictated and supported by their white employer – a powerful symbol of free market enterprise.[156]

[154] Sieving, "Cop Out?" 345-352.
[155] Sieving, "Cop Out?" 345.
[156] Sieving, "Cop Out?" 345-350.

Sieving argues that this moment in the "Cop Killer" controversy marked "white power's" desire to undermine the circulation and believability of Body Count's b(l)ack looking. And in order for expressions of "white power" to operate at maximum efficacy within a hegemonic order, it circulated "invisibly" through the production of discourse.[157]

Rappers responded to "corporatization" by using their politically trenchant lyrics to refocus the conversation on anti-Black practices within the *duppy state* and justify the need for Rap's 'Terrordome.' For example, at the New Music Seminar in New York City on June 15, 1992, Ice T delivered a keynote address in which he claimed that police officers needed to understand the weight of their violence by enduring Rap's terror. He claimed:

> I think cops should feel threatened. […] I feel threatened. I grew up threatened. They should know that they can't take a life without retaliation. […] At no point do I go out and say, let's do it [kill a cop]. I'm singing in the first person as a character who is fed up with police brutality. I ain't never killed no cop. I felt like it a lot of times. But I never did it.[158]

Ice T maintained that "Cop Killer" used a narrative of vigilante justice and terror to respond to the terrifying architectures of anti-Black policing. Ice T reminded the audience that this recording was not a factual tale, nor was it a call to arms. It was a work of art that used fantasy in conjunction with b(l)ack looking to challenge commonplace master narratives of law enforcement as public servants and guardians committed to the public good.[159]

Some members of the media contributed to the de-racialization of rappers' politically trenchant critiques by improperly reporting, decontextualizing and sensationalizing their art. In newspaper coverage of the "Cop Killer" controversy reporters often selectively extracted certain lines from the record, Body Count's broader album, and Ice-T's earlier body of work. Such an

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[157] Sieving, "Cop Out?" 346.
[158] Ice T as quoted in, "Rapper Ice T Defends Song Against Spreading Boycott," *New York Times*, June 16, 1992.
[159] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."

example is the verse: "I got my 12 gauge sawed off. I got my headlights turned off. I'm 'bout to bust some shots off. I'm 'bout to dust some cops off."[160] This lyric was re-printed in a number of newspaper and magazine publications such as the Associated Press report, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Rolling Stone* magazine.[161] By failing to include the spoken word lead-in that preceded the rapped lyrics, the press misinformed the public, and distorted and decontextualized Ice T's lyrics. This meant that the public – particularly those constituents who lacked an understanding of the black experience in America – did not have a full understanding of the protagonist's anger. In the spoken word lead-in on "Cop Killer," Ice T claimed that the record was dedicated to: "every cop that has ever taken advantage of somebody, beat 'em down or hurt 'em cause they had long hair, listened to the wrong kind of music, wrong color, whatever they thought was the reason to do it - for every one of those fuckin' police."[162] By selectively citing "Cop Killer," and therefore de-contextualizing the lyric, journalists sensationalized the record as an example of brutal lawlessness and unjustified rage. This journalistic practice had the effect of solidifying tropes of Black criminality and delegitimizing Rap narratives that framed Black people, rather than police, as the terrified and terrorized.

The "Cop Killer" controversy also drew attention to the ways in which the public conflated tropes of Black criminality with particular forms of music-making that were popularly imagined as 'Black.' Ice T reasoned that the media purposely drew attention to "Cop Killer's" Rap lyrics rather than its Metal instrumentals to strengthen the record's association Rap, which was by the 1990s imagined as an example of threatening blackness. Ice T openly refuted such a simplistic

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[160] Body Count, "Cop Killer," 1992, *Body Count* (Sire/Warner Bros., WEA-1541, 1992).
[161] Chuck Philips, "Rap Song Protest Heats Up," Los Angeles Times, June 13 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-06-13/entertainment/ca-57_1_los-angeles (accessed December 5, 2016); Alan Light, "The Rolling Stone Interview: Ice T," *Rolling Stone*, August 20 1992, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-rolling-stone-interview-ice-t-19920820 (accessed December 5, 2016);
[162] Body Count, "Cop Killer"; Sieving, "Cop Out?" 342-344.

reading of Body Count. He continually maintained that Body Count, an all-Black band, had made a "Rock album with a Rap mentality" for an overwhelmingly white fan base.[163] He claimed that critics defined the record as 'Rap' to attribute its problem status to blackness. Ice-T argued that critics imprecisely reduced the band to practitioners of an exclusively black cultural form, with a Black rapper at its helm. He suggested that critics also made the assumption that Body Count's fan base was exclusively made up of Black teenagers who could potentially become 'cop killers.'[164] Ice T contended that critics knew that labelling the album 'Rap' would increase its controversy and produce the discursive association of "Rap-Black, Rap-Black-ghetto."[165] Ice T described this decision as "a political move" in that critics knew that labelling the album 'Rock' would have elicited very little anger, far less interest and a disassociation and denial of "Cop Killer" as an authentic Rock record. He maintained that people would say, "'Oh, but I like Jefferson Airplane, I like Fleetwood Mac, [because] that's Rock."[166] This perception fit neatly with existent discourse about Rock, which by the early 1990s was largely racialized as 'white' and working class despite its historical roots in the African American musical tradition.

The "Cop Killer" controversy also demonstrated the degree to which white parents felt threatened by Rap and its growing influence over their children who now constituted a significant portion of their mainstream audience. According to Mike Fine, co-owner of the New York-based research firm Sound Data, by the early 1990s Rap was no longer primarily or exclusively consumed and purchased by African Americans. The majority of Rap consumers (that is in terms of record purchasing power) were white and under the age of 25. A July 1992 survey indicated that in 1992,

[163] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."
[164] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."
[165] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."
[166] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."

seventy-four percent of all the Rap records sold were purchased by white consumers.[167] In his conversations with the press, Ice T argued that beneath the public logic that "Cop Killer" was Rap music was a paranoia among white parents over the capacity of rappers to influence their children, and possibly even undermine and threaten their sense of power. Ice T maintained that the "Cop Killer" controversy was not categorically about anti-policing sentiment. Rather, it was about the fear that white parents had over the possibility that their children were rejecting anti-black attitudes. He believed that critics were preoccupied with an album that "got inside suburbia a little deeper than a normal Rap record would."[168] Ice T contended that the American public was deeply preoccupied with the supposed threat posed by cultural miscegenation, particularly the sort of "infiltrat[ration]" of white homes [where parents] were not accustomed to hearing their children play black music that critiqued white privilege and supported a progressive attitude towards racism."[169] He reasoned that "Cop Killer" conveyed to white youth a type of anger, "with the same force of their [white parents'] hate," and in the case of parents it, "scare[d] them when they [saw] it being kicked back at them."[170]

These discursive attempts to reassign Ice T to the Rap landscape despite his declaration that Body Count's work was Metal reflected a problematic popular music practice to classify, regulate and constrict Black cultural expression. Ice T drew attention to the commonplace tendency to associate Black musicians with Rap – and by extension notions of violence, rage, and the criminalization of the urban. Remi Warner argues that gatekeepers used this practice of "narrowcasting" to assign and compartmentalize specialty marketplaces as 'Black' to manage

[167] Phillips, "The Uncivil War"
[168] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."
[169] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."
[170] Light, "Ice-T Raps About the LA Riots, the 'Cop Killer' Controversy, and Getting Political."

bodies and narratives identified as 'other' within the popular culture terrain.[171] As a result, "Cop Killer's" expression of black rage was solely imagined as Rap rather than Metal. This designation also had the effect of casting Metal as "non-black."

Ice T complicated this discursive contest by drawing attention to Rap's 'Terrordome' and suggesting that "Cop Killer" was not a Rap song but an example of a "Rap mentality." While "Cop Killer" did not have an instrumental typical of Rap recordings, it did have a decidedly non-melodic spoken word delivery. By mobilizing a "Rap mentality," Ice depicted complicated readings of the urban as social problem and criminal. He also drew to the fore 'Terrordome' narratives about the variegated black experiences that are housed, constructed, produced, recalled, articulated and disseminated from a rapper's mind that can be, and often have been intense and adversarial. These lyrics were an example of Sharpe's concept of "weaponized blackness" in that the terror housed within the landscape of a rapper's brain about policing was both frightening to those who imagined blackness as a problem space, as well as Blacks who experienced the trauma of the *duppy state*."[172] By referencing Rap's 'Terrordome,' Ice T used Black experiences to inform the public of the *duppy state's* ecosystem, and how discourses of blackness materially shaped the parameters and limits placed on Black life.

As rappers mobilized the 'Terrordome' to address the problem of American policing, the "Cop Killer" controversy demonstrated the troubling level of power that law enforcement had to expunge narratives they deemed threatening to public discourse. *New York Times* journalist Jon Pareles argued that police and benevolent association protests against "Cop Killer" indicated that law enforcement was unwilling to permit the dissemination of narratives that did not frame police

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[171] Remi Warner, "Hiphop with a Northern Touch!? Diasporic Wanderings/Wonderings on Canadian Blackness" *Topia* 15 (Spring 2006): 49.
[172] Sharpe, *In The Wake*, 19, 37-41, 46-47, 81-82.

as admirable public protectors. The public actions of policing organizations revealed their ability to suppress counter-narratives about how racialized Americans experienced state power. Pareles argued,

> Since the popular music audience is treated as if it can't distinguish lyrics from propaganda, it might also be worth imagining police action against other songs, like "I Shot the Sheriff" or "Pretty Boy Floyd." American culture has a long-established anti-authoritarian streak that often casts the police as symbols of oppression. Ice-T's detractors would like to purge popular music of any such impulses. The suppression of 'Cop Killer' doesn't merely encourage pressure groups. The police aren't just any pressure group; on or off duty, they belong to the armed force of the state. And the campaign against 'Cop Killer' has now established a new bottom-line taboo, one that only die-hard free-speech enthusiasts would think of questioning, against singing about the murder of police officers: against not just the evil deed, but also the word. In a 1990's culture where political correctness has become a buzzword and punching bag, we now have something new: police correctness. It's not on the books, but clearly it's enforceable.[173]

Pareles' summary of the "Cop Killer" incident pointed to two lessons. First, "Cop Killer" critics used the boycotts to convey to Americans that it was unacceptable to publicly articulate a desire to murder police officers. These boycotters also used the controversy to strike down any attempt to question the actions of officers or how they exercised their authority. These actions were examples of a desire among anti-Rap critics to restrict contrarian opinion among those who did not have favourable experiences with police. Second, the police – like politicians – had the power to enforce their will, unquestioned, regardless of the degree to which their repression impeded the rights of others.[174]

The continued censorship of rappers who used Rap's 'Terrordome' to question American systems of power led many practitioners to suggest that the *real* problem elites had was Rap's impact on white youth. By late July, following a series of death threats, Body Count crumbled under the pressure and removed "Cop Killer" from their album. Following Body Count's decision,

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[173] Pareles, "The Disappearance of Ice T's Cop Killer," C13, C16.
[174] Pareles, "The Disappearance of Ice T's Cop Killer," C13, C16.

Sire Records asked retailers to send back unsold albums until a new record without "Cop Killer" could be distributed.[175] Ice T admitted that the band removed "Cop Killer" from the album because he didn't, "want Warner Brothers or Time Warner to have to defend this [song], because [he was the] issue."[176] He claimed, "You'll see. You'll take (the song) off and they'll still come after me, because I've reached white kids. [And] I'm tired of being the Willie Horton of the moment."[177] Ice T suggested that the controversy over Body Count's record was being utilized in political discourse during an election year to strengthen the perception, particularly among white Americans, that (Black) rappers and the narratives they disseminated were threatening to America's moral fabric.[178]

The "Cop Killer" controversy also revealed the ways in which rappers were pressured to compromise and withdraw their messaging from public circulation even as their record label continued to profit from their art. At the height of the "Cop Killer" controversy, Time Warner – in an interesting and suspicious move – flooded the record market with a half million copies of the recording days before the distribution of the album was voluntarily suspended.[179] Four days after the band's decision to suspend their album from circulation, Ice T told the L.A. press that they also decided to withdraw "Cop Killer" because of threats to his daughter's life and a barrage of calls and faxes sent to Time Warner offices by unnamed police officers. Ice T told the press, "at the moment the cops are in a criminal mode."[180] Media outlets reported that at least one bomb threat

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[175] Pareles, "The Disappearance of Ice T's Cop Killer," C13, C16.
[176] "Is Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' Legal?"
[177] "Is Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' Legal?"; During the 1988 presidential election, Republican candidate George H.W. Bush Sr. used the case of Willie Horton (a Black American who was serving a life sentence for murder and was released from a Massachusetts prison on a weekend furlough program during which he committed assault, armed robbery and rape) in the "Weekend Passes" and "Revolving Door" campaign ads (released the fall of 1988) to depict his opponent Democrat Michael Dukakis as 'soft' on crime and solidify his votership numbers. As Governor of Massachusetts, Dukakis vetoed a measure that would have made convicted murderers ineligible for furloughs.
[178] Heck, "Ice-T Speaks Out On Censorship, Cop Killer, his Leaving Warner Bros., and More."
[179] Heck, "Ice-T Speaks Out On Censorship, Cop Killer, his Leaving Warner Bros., and More."
[180] J. D. Considine, "Death Threats Force Rapper Ice-T to Yank 'Cop' From Album," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 29, 1992, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-07-29/features/1992211244_1_ice-t-warner-bros-body-count (accessed October 27 2014); Sieving, "Cop Out?" 339.

was made against Time Warner's headquarters, and at least one executive received a death threat from an anonymous party who called him a "nigger-loving Jew." [181] Warner's Vice President and national publicity director Bob Merlis told the press, "let's put it this way, the bomb squad was here twice."[182]

Despite the public discourse regarding "Cop Killer," Rap audiences continued to support the band financially by listening to the recording and purchasing the album in great numbers. Music industry statistics indicate that the record continued to surge in popularity even as Rap detractors framed the album and its recording as dangerous. By August 7, 1992, the record was in its 17th week on the *Billboard* chart. Over that period, *Body Count* jumped 47 places – soaring from 73rd to 26th position.[183] Journalist Jon Pareles attributed this leap to two factors. First, consumers used their purchasing power to demonstrate their solidarity with Ice T who they believed was entitled to freedom of speech. Second, consumers purchased any remaining copies in hopes that the record would become a valuable collector's item.[184] Nearly a year later, the *Village Voice* reported that if the single was sealed, it was selling for upwards of $300.[185] This estimate indicated that due to "Cop Killer's" scarcity and its 'disappearance' from retailer's shelves, it had increased substantially in value.

In the aftermath of "Cop Killer's" removal from retail spaces, Ice T publicly acknowledged law enforcement's capacity to halt his financial success and mute the public conversation about policing that he wanted to have. Ice T claimed that,

> When I started out I was signed to Warner Brothers and they never censored us. Everything we did, we have full control over. But what happened was when the cops

[181] "Is Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' Legal?"
[182] Philips, "Ice-T Pulls 'Cop Killer' Off the Market"; Considine, "Death Threats Force Rapper Ice-T to Yank 'Cop' From Album."
[183] "Controversial Ice-T Album Scales Chart," Orlando Sentinel, August 7, 1992, http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1992-08-07/news/9208070605_1_ice-t-warner-sire (accessed October 27 2014).
[184] Pareles, "The Disappearance of Ice T's Cop Killer," C13, C16.
[185] Lisa Kennedy, "Keep Dope Alive," *The Village Voice*, April 13, 1993, 63, 66-67; "Is Ice-T's 'Cop Killer' legal?"

> moved on Body Count they issued pressure on the corporate division of Warner Brothers, and that made the music division, they couldn't out-fight 'em in the battle, so even when you're in a business with somebody who might not wanna censor you, economically people can put restraints on 'em and cause 'em to be afraid. [186]

Three months after "Cop Killer's" removal from *Body Count*, Warner Brothers Records abandoned plans to release Ice T's new album. An unnamed lawyer familiar with the situation claimed that Ice T had been "granted an unconditional release" from his contract due to a disagreement over the cover artwork for Ice T's new album *Home Invasion*.[187] Ice T admitted that the "Cop Killer" controversy forced him to recognize that Warner Brothers Records prioritized protecting their economic investment in ways that compromised his artistic integrity and intention. He reasoned, "you're never really safe as long as you're connected to any big corporation's money."[188]

The "Cop Killer" controversy revealed that rappers often had to come to the difficult realization that their record labels were not particularly invested in protecting or supporting their ability to have difficult conversations about race in power in America. In the aftermath of Ice T's contractual release from Warner Brothers Records, he conceded that the label was complicit in censoring a conversation about the brutal architectures of American policing. In an interview with the *Village Voice*'s RJ Smith, Ice T claimed that the controversy taught him that corporations had little interest in protecting an artist's ability to create protest art. He admitted that the record business was made up of "very greedy, [and] selfish people who only care about themselves."[189] Ice T believed that industry folks were merely preoccupied with the profit margin and their branding. He claimed that this controversy was never about the "bigger picture" – that is, Body

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[186] "A Roc Exclusive: Ice-T speaks out on censorship, Cop Killer, his leaving Warner Bros., and more."
[187] Sheila Rule, "Ice T and Warner are Parting Company," *New York Times* (National Edition), January 29, 1993; Lisa Kennedy, "Keep Dope Alive," *The Village Voice*, September 27 1993, 63, 66, 67; The controversial cover of Ice T's *Home Invasion* was said to have depicted a white teenaged boy, sitting cross-legged and closed-eyed with his Walkman cranked loudly. Floating in the air around the boy was a comic book illustration of his fantasy: his father being struck over the head with the end of a rifle and his mother being grabbed by a masked stranger.
[188] "A Roc Exclusive: Ice-T speaks out on censorship, Cop Killer, his leaving Warner Bros., and more."
[189] Lisa Kennedy, "Keep Dope Alive," 63, 66, 67.

Count's critique of police violence and the brutalization of African American communities. Ice T asked Smith: "Why wasn't anybody coming out and saying, yo, [Ice T has] the right to say this because the police *are* assholes?"[190] He argued that when record companies stood down to boycotts, they became complicit in what he called "shutting up all the bullshit" – or otherwise put, shutting down Rap's critique. Ice T argued that he was most troubled by Warner Brothers' decision to remain silent on law enforcement's abuse of power, rather than their decision to capitalize on all the products that flowed from the controversy.[191] Here, like the 2 Live Crew controversy, the record industry did not suffer or incur any costs. That said, unlike 2 Live Crew, Ice T and Body Count were not able to mobilize freedom of speech in such a way that generated interest and investment in their core messaging about American policing.

"The Hate That Hate Produced": The Case Against Sister Souljah

On March 17, 1992, nearly a month prior to the L.A. Riots, rapper Sister Souljah released her debut album *360 Degrees of Power* about the nature of contemporary race relations. Souljah, a former member of the Rap group Public Enemy, wrote an album that detailed a figurative Black-white race war that Americans had been lulled into believing did not exist. Dennis Hunt of the *Los Angeles Times* described the album as, "a stark, disturbing primer on Black power. [Souljah] uses crude street language and scathing humour to convey her controversial ideas – such as the argument that God is Black and that white feminist leaders are devious lesbians."[192]

Like many "Rap Nationalism" artists, Souljah used the art form to describe America's deepening racial tensions as well as the inadequacy of many of the nation's political leaders to

[190] Lisa Kennedy, "Keep Dope Alive," 63, 66, 67.
[191] Lisa Kennedy, "Keep Dope Alive," 63, 66, 67.
[192] Dennis Hunt, "Sister Souljah Gives Voice to Black Anger," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 7 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-03-07/entertainment/ca-3495_1_sister-souljah (accessed October 27 2014).

address issues of race and power. When Souljah released the album's leading single "The Hate That Hate Produced," it was accompanied by a music video that parodied a meeting between New York City's Black mayor (re-named "Tom Dickinson"), two white New Yorkers and two orthodox male Jews wearing payot. The first white man claimed that the mayor needed to address New York City's racial tensions because they were "bad for business." He was interrupted by one of the Jewish American men who contended that their community was "terrorized by these youth roaming around the streets in wolfpacks." The final complaint came from the other white male who argued, "my wife can't run in Central Park anymore. The police department does nothing about it. These Black wilding youth rapists are running wild."[193] The mayor responded in an anxious tone: "you're absolutely right. I'll call the police and the national guard in the morning."[194] Souljah used the music video to gesture to existent racial antagonisms and represent New York City's first and only African American mayor Democrat David Dinkins (1990-1993) as a fraught accommodationist and Uncle Tom. While Dinkins was responsible for rehabilitating dilapidated housing, ending a 30 year upward spiral of violent crime, and preserving a portion of anti-crime funding to keep teenagers off the streets, he also authored an anti-crime program which substantially expanded the street patrol police force, and hesitated to face down many instances of racial and ethnic antagonism as in the Family Red Apple boycott and the Crown Heights riot.[195] Souljah also

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[193] Sister Souljah, "The Hate That Hate Produced (music video)," 1992, *360 Degrees of Power,* Sony BMG Music Entertainment, 1992.
[194] Sister Souljah, "The Hate That Hate Produced (music video)," 1992, *360 Degrees of Power,* Sony BMG Music Entertainment, 1992.
[195] Ralph Blumenthal, "Dinkins On Crime; Dinkins Proposes Record Expansion of Police Forces," *The New York Times*, October 3 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/03/nyregion/dinkins-on-crime-dinkins-proposes-record-expansion-of-police-forces.html?pagewanted=all (accessed December 4 2016); Michael Powell, "Another Look At The Dinkins Administration, and Not By Giuliani," *The New York Times*, October 25 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/26/nyregion/26dinkins.html?_r=0 (accessed December 2016). The 1990-1991 Family Red Apple boycott was a reaction to a Korean-American owned shop in Flatbush, Brooklyn where a Haitian woman was allegedly assaulted by three of the shop's employees. The shopkeeper refuted the allegation and claimed that the woman did not pay for store items. The incident led to public criticism of Dinkins for his failure to end the protest. The Crown Heights riot (August 19 to August 21, 1991) in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York City began after two children of Guyanese immigrants were unintentionally struck by an automobile in the

referenced the Central Park jogger case, the supposed anxieties over New York youth who engaged in "wilding," and continuous discourses that framed urban Black male youth as predators, criminals and rapists.[196]

Like Rap Nationalists before her, Souljah used Rap music to strike down Black accomodationist politics and advocate for a forceful and uncompromising response to *duppy state* practices. In her video for "The Hate That Hate Produced," Souljah was depicted at the helm of a table before a group of young Black men and young Black women wearing baseball caps with the phrase "hoodlums" on the front and holding automatic weapons. She rapped:

> The time for scared, lip-trembling, word-changing / Self-denying, compromising / Knee-shakin' Black people is over / If you have something to say / Speak up with authority and conviction / If not, sit down and shut up / […] Souljah was not born to make white people feel comfortable / I am African first, I am Black first / I want what's good for me and my people first / And if my survival means your total destruction / Then so be it / You built this wicked system / They say two wrongs don't make it right / But it damn sure makes it even / […] And if the truth drives you crazy, you'll die insane / […] Yeah, I know your nerves are wrecked to hear a woman / That's a rebel / […] / My mind is mine, my thoughts are a friend to me / Damn your color and white world supremacy.[197]

"The Hate That Hate Produced" argued that the solution to the conundrum of race and power in America was fearlessness, confrontation, authority, conviction, and a commitment to the welfare

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motorcade of Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the leader of the Jewish Chabad-Lubavitch movement). The Crown Heights riot triggered resentment over unaddressed issues of policing, and the use of public and private space. In the aftermath, Dinkins was blamed for an ineffective police response to the antagonisms between Hasidim Jews, African Americans and the Black Caribbean community. Dinkins' perceived indifference to the plight of the Jewish community during the riot became one of the centerpieces in his 1993 mayoral defeat by Republican Rudy Giuliani.

[196] On April 19, 1989, Trisha Meili, a 28-year-old investment banker, was assaulted and raped in New York City's Central Park. In 1990, five juvenile males – four of African American and one of Latino American descent – were accused of "wilding" (when a gang of youth go on a protracted and violent rampage in a public place and attack people at random) and tried and convicted, variously, for assault, robbery, riot, rape, sexual abuse, and attempted murder. The teenagers received sentences ranging from five to fifteen years and spent between six and thirteen years in prison. Four of the convictions were appealed by appellate courts. In 2002, Matias Reyes (who was not among the original five juvenile defendants) confessed that he raped Meili alone. DNA evidence confirmed his involvement. That same year, the convictions of the five initial defendants were vacated. For more on this case, see, Natalie Byfield, *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014).

[197] Sister Souljah, "The Hate That Hate Produced," 1992, *360 Degrees of Power* (Epic, E 48713, 1992).

of African Americans. Souljah made clear that she knew she was perceived as threatening given her representation as an uncompromising Black woman who was unwilling to play down the threat, effects and damage caused by white supremacy.

Like Ice T, as Sister Souljah attempted to use Rap as a politically useful tool, her reading of race and power drew an enormous backlash from a number of state actors. Amidst the release of her debut album, Sister Souljah was asked by the press to comment on the L.A. Riots which generated critique from Republicans and Democrats who recognized the political potential of her b(l)ack looking. Among this cadre of politicians who commented was Democratic presidential nominee Bill Clinton who voiced his opinion about Souljah's statements at the Rainbow Coalition's National Convention on June 13, 1992. Clinton, like Souljah, had been asked to attend the event to speak about the importance of voting. He did so the day following Souljah who was asked to speak directly to youth as part of the event's Youth Summit. At the convention Clinton called attention to an interview Souljah gave to *The Washington Post* exactly a month prior.[198] In his speech Clinton stated,

> Let's stand up for what's always been best about the Rainbow Coalition: which is people coming across racial lines. […] You had a Rap singer here last night named Sister Souljah. I defend her right to express herself through music but her comments before and after [the] Los Angeles [Riots] were filled with the kind of hatred that you do not honour today and tonight. Just listen to this, what she said. She told the *Washington Post* about a month ago, and I quote, 'If Black people kill Black people everyday, why not have a week and kill white people? So, you're a gang member and you normally kill somebody, why not kill a white person?' Last year she said, 'you can't call me or any Black person anywhere in the world a racist. We don't have the power to do to white people what white people have done to us. And even if we did, we don't have that low-down dirty nature. If there are any good white people, I haven't met them. Where are they?' [199]

[198] Sam Fulwood III, "Clinton Chides Rap Singer, Stuns Jackson," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-06-14/news/mn-890_1_rap-singer (accessed October 17 2014); Sheila Rule, "Rapper, Chided by Clinton, Calls Him a Hypocrite," June 17, 1992, http://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/17/us/the-1992-campaign-racial-issues-rapper-chided-by-clinton-calls-him-a-hypocrite.html (accessed October 17 2014).
[199] "Clinton's Sister Souljah Moment on C-Span," June 13, 1992, video clip, *YouTube*, http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4460582/sister-souljah-moment (accessed July 28 2013).

To that question he answered, "Right here in this room." He then continued, "when people say that, if you took the words white and black, and you reversed them, you might think that David Duke was giving that speech."[200] Clinton's discursive strategy of linking Souljah to an ex- Ku Klux Klan Clansman served to brand Souljah as a racial extremist and allude to the potential danger of her statements. In doing so, Clinton disarticulated the logic of Souljah's b(l)ack looking that linked the *duppy state's* illegal policing methods to anti-black racism and white supremacy.[201]

As Clinton closed out his speech, he used moral panic language to frame Souljah's words as racially divisive and a potential threat to a Democratic win. Clinton stated, "we can't get anywhere in this country pointing the finger at each other across racial lines. If we do that, we're dead, and they [Republicans] will beat us."[202] Daryl A. Carter argues that following the L.A. Riots, Clinton was under significant pressure to condemn Souljah's comments. He also had to prove his political viability by demonstrating that he was not bound to 'special interests.' This meant that Clinton needed to address African American politics while also speaking to the needs of middle class white voters who may or may not have solidly identified as members of his base.[203] Notable publications like the *New York Times* read Clinton's speech as a symbolic gesture meant to prove that he would not be held captive by the popular perception that Democrats catered their political platform to African American communities.[204] Ronald Walters argues that as a result of this pressure, the Sister Souljah controversy,

> had been a deliberate strategy designed by campaign operative Paul Begala to help Clinton's appeal with the white Reagan Democrats. […] By being willing to publicly

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[200] "Clinton's Sister Souljah Moment on C-Span."
[201] "Clinton's Sister Souljah Moment on C-Span."
[202] "Clinton's Sister Souljah Moment on C-Span."
[203] Daryl A. Carter, *Brother Bill: President Clinton and the Politics of Race and Class* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2016), 9-12.
[204] Gwen Ifill, "The 1992 Campaign: Democrat; Clinton at Jackson Meeting: Warmth, and Some Friction," *New York Times*, June 14, 1992, 30.

> criticize a well-known figure in the Black community, he [demonstrated that he] was not beholden to [Rev. Jesse] Jackson or the Black community."[205]

Jack White of *TIME Magazine* noted that by attacking sister Souljah, Clinton was able to refocus media attention on his message to moderate voters – that is, that he was unafraid to deliver unpopular messages to important democratic constituencies.[206]

The Sister Souljah controversy exemplified how state actors were increasingly using a narrative of terror to stoke public fears about blackness to produce politically beneficial outcomes for themselves. By framing Sister Souljah's comments as a threat to the social order, Clinton solidified his voting base, capitalized upon the growing anti-Rap campaign, and fueled fears over a possible Republican victory. In doing so, Clinton failed to engage with Souljah's critique and her engagement with discourses of dispossession which rendered visible a vision of police brutality that was subsumed under the prevailing post-Civil Rights era logic of colourblindness. In the context of Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, Clinton's attack on Sister Souljah also peripherally delegitimized her contributions to the Youth Summit.[207]

While some Civil Rights activists were critical of Rap lyrics and performances, some recognized the political usefulness of Rap's 'Terrordome' and came to the defense of rappers. Activists like Civil Rights icon Reverend Jesse Jackson quickly critiqued Clinton's assessment of Sister Souljah for its use of coded racial appeals to expand the democratic base. Jackson's defense of Souljah foreshadowed how the Civil Rights generation would continue to come to the defense of some Rap artists, particularly as state actors increasingly targeted the genre (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five). Following Clinton's comments, Jackson stated that Clinton had misquoted

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[205] Ronald Walters, *Freedom Is Not Enough: Black Voters, Black Candidates, and American Presidential Politics* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 54.
[206] *Jack White, "Sister Souljah: Capitalist Tool," Time, June 29, 1992.*
[207] Fulwood III, "Clinton Chides Rap Singer, Stuns Jackson."

Souljah and that his attack on her character was unfair, divisive and an unnecessary diversion. Jackson told the press that he was puzzled by Clinton's decision to use the event to address remarks that were already a month-old. He believed that Clinton's assessment was likely intended for an audience that was not present.[208] Nearly a week later, Jackson told the *New York Times* that Clinton's attack of Souljah "exposed a character flaw" and demonstrated his intent to "purely appeal to conservative whites."[209] Ian Hanley Lopez argues that like Republican candidate George H. W. Bush's use of the Willie Horton narrative during the 1988 presidential election, Clinton's use of the Sister Souljah moment was an example of racial pandering and dog whistle politics that centered on coded appeals to race. Lopez maintains that in the post-WWII period, these tactics were used by conservatives – Republicans and Democrats alike – to generate support from white and wealthy constituents and swell the electorate vote in that candidate's favour. Lopez maintains that just as the Horton narrative tapped into commonly held myths of black criminality, the Sister Souljah moment mobilized commonly held myths of black depravity, law-breaking criminality and the broader criminalization of urban space. These myths had the effect of stoking already present fears among constituents that did not necessarily form Clinton's existent base.[210]

Scholars argue that Clinton's statements were part of a broader trend among Democrats to appeal to white voters by openly espousing a more conservative agenda on law and order and a set of public rhetorical strategies used by Republican predecessors and contemporaries. Bryan McCann argues that under the Clinton presidency, the dominant discourse held that social problems and suffering arising from poverty, degradation, and oppression were attributable to the

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[208] Fulwood III, "Clinton Chides Rap Singer, Stuns Jackson."
[209] "Jackson Sees Clinton 'Flaw' in Attack on Rapper," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-06-19/news/mn-654_1_jesse-jackson (accessed October 27 2014).
[210] Ian Hanley Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2-6, 106.

pathology of poverty and the supposedly inherent incapacity of some groups to climb out of its clutches. In the aftermath of the L.A. Riots, Clinton's emphasis on law and order effectively attributed American poverty and crime to urban populations. McCann argues that this was especially true in his first term when the Clinton administration successfully passed the 1994 Omnibus Crime Control Act and the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. These acts expanded the federal death penalty to sixty crimes, appropriated $10 billion for prison construction, allocated funds for hiring more police officers, and significantly curtailed death row appeals.[211]

Three days after Clinton's comments, Sister Souljah gave a news conference where she suggested that politicians were using anti-Rap sentiment to play politics in an election year. At the Marriott East Side Hotel in New York City, Souljah called Clinton a "hypocritical draft-dodging, pot-smoking womanizer," and his remarks "a poor excuse for an agenda-less candidate."[212] She claimed that like Republicans who had used the Willie Horton moment during the 1988 presidential election, Clinton was using Souljah's comments to distance himself from Black leaders, fuel white fears of urban rioting, and drive support for his political career.[213] She stated:

> Bill Clinton says he is not a racist, but he tries to distance himself from the Rev. Jesse Jackson, a candidate who has registered more [Black] voters than Bill Clinton. [Clinton] lacks integrity, and paints himself as a staunch patriot, a people's servant, a compassionate liberal, a family man, and a pro-woman candidate. He lacks integrity in all of those areas.[214]

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[211] McCann, "Contesting the Mark of Criminality," 96-97.
[212] Chuck Philips, "'I Do Not Advocate ... Murdering': 'Raptivist' Sister Souljah Disputes Clinton Charge," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-06-17/entertainment/ca-573_1_sister-souljah (accessed October 27 2014).
[213] Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 127-130; Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 2-6, 106; Rule, "Rapper, Chided by Clinton, Calls Him a Hypocrite"; Philips, "'I Do Not Advocate ... Murdering': 'Raptivist' Sister Souljah Disputes Clinton Charge."
[214] Rule, "Rapper, Chided by Clinton, Calls Him a Hypocrite."

In her statement, Souljah shamed Clinton for lacking a substantive and comprehensive political agenda, and for failing to embody and promote the qualities of service, compassion, family values, and gender equality that he espoused. She claimed that Clinton used moral panic language and commonplace narratives about black criminality to "scare white people [and] to mobilize them into action."[215]

The Sister Souljah moment reflected how state actors used the power of the written word to decontextualize Rap's politically useful critiques of the *duppy state*. As the controversy over Clinton's comments quickly dissipated, public attention shifted to Souljah's statements in the *Washington Post* article that Clinton had largely taken out of context for his own political gain. In her explanation to the press, Souljah stated that she was not advocating for the killing of white or Black people. She claimed that Clinton had done the equivalent of "walk into a room on a conversation about to end and then surmise what happened before he got there."[216] She clarified that her statements were meant to express solidarity with L.A. rioters and perform the possible mindset of gang members who were troubled by the Rodney King acquittals and the brutal architectures of Los Angeles policing.[217]

Members of the press used the Sister Souljah moment to clarify and contextualize the growing campaign against Rap artists. Following Souljah's statements, *The Washington Post* decided to re-print a partial transcript of the interview to clarify its context for the American public. The re-print demonstrated that Souljah was responding to a question about what the views of gang members might have been prior to the riot. The reporter asked, "But even the people themselves who were perpetrating that violence, did they think it was wise?" Souljah replied:

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[215] Philips, "'I Do Not Advocate ... Murdering': 'Raptivist' Sister Souljah Disputes Clinton Charge."
[216] Rule, "Rapper, Chided by Clinton, Calls Him a Hypocrite."
[217] Rule, "Rapper, Chided by Clinton, Calls Him a Hypocrite"; Philips, "'I Do Not Advocate ... Murdering': 'Raptivist' Sister Souljah Disputes Clinton Charge."

> Yeah, it was wise. I mean, if Black people kill Black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people? You understand what I'm saying? In other words, white people, this government, and that mayor [Tom Bradley] were well aware of the fact that Black people were dying every day in Los Angeles under gang violence. So, if you're a gang member and you would normally be killing somebody, why not kill a white person? Do you think that somebody thinks that white people are better, or above and beyond dying, when they would kill their own kind?[218]

The re-print clarified that Clinton had omitted the context of Souljah's interview which was important to understanding the meaning of her statements. In Clinton's assessment, he misrepresented her as defending both (conflated) groups. However, Souljah was careful to make a distinction between the existent anger in urban black communities, 'Black-on-Black' gang violence, and the disinterest of elected officials. *The Washington Post's* re-print made clear that Sister Souljah was not advocating for the murder of white people. Rather, she was providing *The Washington Post's* reporter with insight into the logic that possibly governed some of the gang members thinking who participated in the L.A Riots. In doing so, Souljah was uncovering the Black geographies of those who were disproportionately oppressed, assaulted and murdered at the hands of racist policing.

By the early 1990s, Sister Souljah was among a number of rappers who argued that they were publicly attacked by state actors, elites, the press and the American public because of unfounded paranoia and a desire to silence *duppy state* critiques. Sister Souljah told the press that she found Clinton's response to her statements and artistry curious because she did not have anywhere near the influence that Clinton feared she did. To substantiate her claim she referenced her three-month old record which barely sold 60,000 units, and her videos which had been banned from MTV.[219] Souljah believed that she was singled out because of her pro-Black and anti-second-

[218] Rule, "Rapper, Chided by Clinton, Calls Him a Hypocrite."
[219] Phillips, "'I Do Not Advocate ... Murdering': 'Raptivist' Sister Souljah Disputes Clinton Charge."

wave-white feminism messaging which the press often read as anti-white. Souljah claimed that Clinton's distaste for her was because white America had a problem with, "an[y] African man or woman [who] takes a strong stand for the development and control over their own lives."[220]

The Sister Souljah moment confirmed that when state actors deployed coded appeals to race to drum up public paranoia, they could successfully produce outcomes that worked in the favour of their political agendas. By late October 1992, press coverage confirmed that Clinton's use of racial pandering and dog whistle politics during the Sister Souljah saga had worked: Clinton had generated an increase in political support. On October 28th African American journalist Clarence Page of the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Clinton's public skirmish with Souljah was his "straw pony." Page confirmed that after examining a set of tracking polls on the presidential election from campaign surveys and focus groups, the Sister Souljah moment took Clinton from third place to first. Page reported that the data, which predominantly tracked the attitudes of white suburban and blue-collar swing voters, indicated that the Clinton-Souljah conflict was one of the most important moments in the campaign for these constituents. Page contended that these voters were largely characterized by fear, wariness or outright resentment of African Americans and liberals who advocated on behalf of the poor.[221] Seven days after the *Tribune* released its polls, the results of the 52nd quadrennial presidential election were in. Bill Clinton was declared the 42nd President of the United States.

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[220] Phillips, "'I Do Not Advocate ... Murdering': 'Raptivist' Sister Souljah Disputes Clinton Charge."
[221] Clarence Page, "Bill Clinton's Debt To Sister Souljah," *Chicago Tribune*, October 28, 1992, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1992-10-28/news/9204070622_1_sister-souljah-bill-clinton-reagan-democrats (accessed October 27 2014).

Conclusion

By examining the 2 Live Crew, Body Count and Sister Souljah cases, this chapter demonstrated how Rap's 'Terrordome' responded to, shaped and conditioned the meanings of blackness and the circulation of power in the early 1990s. From atop the power regime, rappers' lyrics, cited statements and performances were often imagined as perverse, depraved, terrifying, and threatening to the public good. Rap discourse engagements were increasingly imagined as artefacts that had the potential to generate conflict, opposition, annoyance and destructive disturbance. These conflicts over Rap's 'Terrordome' centered on freedom of speech which was deployed as metaphor to discuss America's moral fabric, corporate ethics and profits, and resistance towards figures of authority. In these conversations, rappers attempted to re-direct public discourse towards the construction of blackness as threat, the extension of genuine rather than symbolic Black freedom, and the ongoing violence of the *duppy state*. These three case studies emphasized how rappers and powerbrokers strategically mobilized conversations about freedom of speech in a (white) public forum to open up, shut down or erase calls for Black liberation. These conversations had the effect of unmasking late twentieth century America as a false narrative and performance where Black freedom was constantly limited, managed, controlled, contained and denied.

The 2 Live Crew case revealed how complicated Rap masculinities were in that even if rappers used the 'Terrordome' to deconstruct racist representations of Black masculinity, they often performed the violence of patriarchal power. An analysis of this controversy uncovered that while the band suggested that "Me So Horny" reflected their comedic efforts to critique racist stereotypes of Black sexuality, this may have been their genuine desire or a justification after the fact due to public criticisms of sexism and misogyny. While critics argued that 2 Live Crew's sexism was a product of urban environments and black culture, this chapter suggests that "Me So

Horny" was instead a product of an inherently sexist, misogynistic and violent American heteropatriarchy from which they were a product. That said, this detail did not vacate 2 Live Crew from their responsibility to produce content that did not demean women. And so, while the band mobilized freedom of speech to actualize their ability to speak freely, they did so at the expense of all women and Black women in particular. That is, in 2 Live Crew's defense of their material they marginalized, submerged and erased the voices of Black women (and their advocates) beneath a patriarchal logic and practice meant to open up, leverage and actualize the freedom of some Black bodies (namely Black cisgendered heterosexual men). 2 Live Crew became complicit in the act to detract attention away from the function and outcomes of (Black) patriarchy. That said, it is important to acknowledge that the power dynamic in these instances cannot be equated with the power wielded by the *duppy state* – in that 2 Live Crew's investment, potential gain and proximity to power vis-à-vis patriarchy was considerably different.

The 2 Live Crew case also demonstrated how elites mobilized coded appeals to morality in an effort to mask their fears of Black people and their b(l)ack looking. If Gates was correct to suggest that 2 Live Crew's content elaborated on distinctively African American forms of carnivalesque, then Thompson's moral campaign can be read as more than a simple attempt to exert moral authority. This chapter reveals that once Thompson refused to consider the possibility that 2 Live Crew mobilized comedic farce to critique social attitudes towards race and sex, the lens through which he read 2 Live Crew's work narrowed. Thompson's possible mis-reading exemplified the potential cultural illiteracy of elites, or perhaps even their full literacy but dislike of what they read from Rap artefacts. Thompson's reading of 2 Live Crew's work resulted in mapping Rap as a problem space and further inscribing Black (male) performance and subjectivity with non-personhood. While 2 Live Crew was attempting to complicate existing tropes of Black

male sexuality – or perhaps even providing a post-facto justification for their artefact – elites like Thompson insisted upon framing their performances as demeaning, depraved, threatening and even weaponized. Most importantly, this case reveals broader public anxieties about the Black body, sexual violence and the purported threat of Black male sexuality. This case study also clarifies the public's inability and perhaps even unwillingness to deconstruct white paranoias of Black representations.

These controversies over Rap's 'Terrordome' also revealed that race and power was complicated rather than firmly bordered, and Rap could inspire oppositional b(l)ack looking from within the ranks of the powerful and not simply among "the excluded." This was particularly evident in the critiques articulated by Black police officers during the "Cop Killer" controversy. These officers revealed that one's position on the recording was largely framed by one's relationship to power. When white male critics who were in close proximity to power mobilized freedom of speech during the "Cop Killer" controversy, they often erased or at the very least placed as minor in importance Body Count's strident counter-narrative about anti-Black American policing. When Ice T (and Body Count) used a "Rap mentality," or otherwise entered Rap's 'Terrordome,' he centered conversations about the criminalization of urban blackness and challenged the logic undergirding policing and the carceral state. Black police officers on the other hand were proximate to the power of policing, but they leveraged that power to render visible their b(l)ack looking and publicly confirm Ice T's reading. In doing so, these officers affirmed the right of artists to articulate anger and rage over anti-black oppression. While these Black officers were a part of the state apparatus, they also acknowledged that they were fully knowledgeable of the costs of wearing blackness in American cities – so much so that they broke ranks with the blue brotherhood (police). In doing so, these officers stretched the category of policing so as to

complicate the power dynamics between policing organizations and communities racialized as Black. Their interpretations of the "Cop Killer" controversy generated space in (white) public discourse to include the contradictions and complexities that Black police officers experienced as those who mete out policing practices against those who share their experiences of being Black in America.

These case studies also demonstrate that when elites argued that rappers were articulating morals contrary to America's value system, the *real* problem was Rap's 'Terrordome' unmasking the *duppy state*. This was particularly evident in the controversy over "Cop Killer" where Body Count's critics, like N.W.A's in the late 1980s, framed their b(l)ack looking as an 'illogical' and morally bankrupt disrespect of police lives. Critics re-directed Rap efforts to unmask the *duppy state,* and in doing so avoided discussing, undermined or even erased the possibility of a conversation about Los Angeles' anti-black ecosystems. This preoccupation with an imagined anti-police threat also meant that critics derailed genuine attempts to deal with America's long history of racialized violence – primarily that of terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan who had long turned their violence on Black communities. And so, it appeared that in this public discourse, police lives mattered, while Black lives did not.

These conflicts over Rap's 'Terrordome' confirmed for rappers that black freedom (of speech) in (white) public forums was limited. That is, the concept of freedom of speech was applied in strategic ways to promote the freedom of artists to produce art but not necessarily to produce art that openly and unapologetically challenged a particular framework of power. For example, while Body Count's media company publicly articulated that musicians had the right to create without censorship or restriction, they were not willing to: a) publicly support Body Count's counter-narrative about American policing; b) create art that examined (white) youth conflicts with their

parents over interracial unity; and c) support Black artistry beyond their own profit margin. For Body Count, this meant that they had to make some difficult decisions. Instead of working as independent artists and removing the recording company's control over their artistic output, they decided to endure a public boycott, de-politicize their work and remove it from the market – in part due to a real fear for their family members. In doing so, they compromised the integrity of their messaging and perhaps even their artistry with certain consumer constituencies.

These public engagements over Rap's 'Terrordome' also revealed that rappers risked deep personal and professional loss if they leveraged their artistic platform to critique *duppy state* practices. In Sister Souljah's case, her choice to call out anti-black racism and white supremacy resulted in diminished record sales, scathing reviews of her album, and the removal of her material from both radio and music video platforms. Following her statements to *The Washington Post*, Sister Souljah was also recast and recoded in the public imaginary by Bill Clinton and his election team as a purposefully dangerous personality who was utilizing anti-white speech to incite a race-war. Her public shaming at the hands of a powerful white man was reminiscent of a long history rooted in enslavement whereby white men who imagined Black women as easily conquerable and sexually available, exerted control over them as the ultimate expression of their patriarchy. And yet, even as Sister Souljah's Rap career suffered, her entanglement with Bill Clinton also resulted in her transition into the literary world. While she would never record another Rap album, Sister Souljah helped birth a new genre labelled "urban fiction" with the publication of her 1999 novel *The Coldest Winter*.[222]

[222] Souljah's entry into the literary world began with her memoir (*No Disrespect*) in 1995 and was followed four years later by *The Coldest Winter*, a narrative set in in the projects of Brooklyn, New York. The protagonist, Winter Santiaga, was the rebellious and spoiled teenage daughter of a notorious drug dealer whose drug empire collapses following his arrest when he must leave his wife and four daughters to fend for themselves. The book was followed by a prequel in 2008 (*Midnight: A Gangster Love Story*) which spawned its own set of novels, and a sequel about Winter's sister in 2014 (*A Deeper Love Inside: The Porsche Santiaga Story*).

These case studies also revealed that there was a gendered difference in the ways that the 'threat' of Rap's 'Terrordome' was attributed to Black rappers. In the case of Sister Souljah, critics imagined her decision to defend Black men, the black working and workless poor, and a pro-Black and pan-African agenda as intense and even adversarial. Unlike 2 Live Crew or Body Count, Sister Souljah's 'danger' was imagined as rhetorical rather than 'imminent,' 'real,' and embodied. While 2 Live Crew's sexual danger was attributed to their Black male bodies, and Ice T's criminal danger was attributed to (the construction of) Black male rage and the supposed physical violence racialized bodies produce, Sister Souljah spoke of violence that urban gang members (largely imagined as male) were capable of. As such, the violence that she spoke of was imagined as externalized and therefore easily disassociated from the actions she was capable of committing. This difference is not only attributable to discourse and Rap's 'Terrordome,' but also to the ways in which Black masculinity (the physical and sexual body) was regularly portrayed as threatening.

Ultimately, these case studies uncover the complex and untidy intentions, outcomes and ways in which critics mobilized their intellectual and moral authority to convince Americans that the black urban working class were 'villainous,' and their issues were without logic. Even when the discourse was not explicitly focused on race and power, there was little doubt that race framed every lyric, image and encounter. During these battles over Rap's meaning-making, the genre became a screen on which many interest groups played out their political ambitions, displaced their anxieties, and vied for coercive control. These controversies allowed powerbrokers to capitalize upon a fear of the 'other,' sustain dominant fantasies of racialized criminality, and inspire a growing moral panic among Americans who believed that the nation was in a state of chaos and decline. These anti-Rap critics strengthened attempts to criminalize the black urban working class and nullify any critique they brought forth as without internal logic. These strategies would only

intensify when anti-Rap critics took these complaints to the steps of Washington and their concerns over Rap's 'Terrordome' were framed as a national issue necessitating political intervention.

- CHAPTER FIVE -
A "Tight Situation" in Washington: Black Solidarities, the Congressional Hearings on Gangsta Rap and the Million Man March

> *"Like u-hoo, Uncle Sam / Where the hell's the mule and the forty acres of land / that you promised to my ancestors when we was emancipated? / Claim to set us free but we was still segregated / Now all thru this nation, got these Black folks dropped and shamed / […] Got our women with no welfare cheques, powder milk and butter / While our friends be on the corner sellin' shit, killin' each other / [...] Gotta million Black folk ready to march down on D.C / Y'all brothers better realize that in the '95, it's either homicide or genocide / If y'all can't find nothin' to live for, find somethin' to die for nigga." – Kaotic Sypher*[1]

On June 30, 1993, host of *Video Music Box* Ralph Daniels held a live debate on the subject of Rap music censorship on WNYC-TV. Members of the panel included youth educator Coral Aubert, *Right On! Magazine* editor Cynthia Horner, Reverend Calvin O Butts III of Harlem, New York City's Abyssinian Baptist Church, and rapper Ice T who recently came under fire for his recording "Cop Killer." Butts drew attention to a June 1st anti-Gangsta Rap protest where he and members of his congregation stacked Rap records, cassettes, compact disks and videos in the street and crushed them beneath a steamroller. In an act that was oddly reminiscent of Disco Demolition Night, the protestors attempted to crush Gangsta Rap's words and images which critics framed as threatening to the moral fabric of America.[2] Butts argued that when rappers referred to women as "bitches," African Americans as "niggers," and 'Black-on-Black' violence as conflict resolution, they shaped the worldview of Black youth in ways that were irresponsible and destructive. He maintained that Gangsta Rap was a dangerous and deceptive trick of the media and that this identity politics was not in line with Black liberation politics. Butts hoped that rappers would eventually resist participating and colluding in the oppression of Black Americans.[3]

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[1] Kaotic Sypher featuring Bogous, True and P.I. Crazee, "Tight Situation," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[2] Michel Marriott, "Harlem Pastor to Campaign Against Rap Lyrics," *New York Times* (National Edition), May 8 1993.
[3] Marriott, "Harlem Pastor to Campaign Against Rap Lyrics"; Reverend Calvin O Butts III as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack," hosted by Ralph Daniels, broadcast live from WNYC-TV,

The singular Rap voice on the panel maintained that anti-Rap critiques were problematically framing the genre as pathological to bolster their social and economic interests. Ice T interpreted the television debate as an attempt by Black moral and political elites to exacerbate perceptions of black working and workless poor pathology and exploit the controversy for their own personal gain. Ice T accused Butts of using anti-Rap discourses to drum up a celebrity profile for himself while masking his real intentions beneath the illusion of well-meaning morality. He told Butts, "I'm thinkin' that you wouldn't be on television if it wasn't for rappers and other people that could debate you. You'd just be a guy in Harlem at a church."[4] Ice T claimed that anti-Rap critics were not simply targeting 'irresponsible' popular culture ideas and iconography.[5] The rapper maintained that if that were the case, Butts might have also targeted American beer brands like Keystone and Budweiser that used advertising images of wealth, rebellion, gender stereotypes and anti-woman messaging.[6] Ice T argued,

> If you attack the beer commercials you don't get as much news, so attack somebody Black. Attack kids from the streets that have created another kind of music and are trying to come up, and say you're not doing it the way I would like you to do it. […] you just got a problem with the way I grew up and the way I live.[7]

Ice T then leaned back in his chair, looked Butts squarely in the face and said: "I ain't got no love for nobody like you. I don't care if you're a Reverend…as far as I'm concerned, you [sic] the devil."[8] To which Butts answered: "well, see I do have love for you, and that's what makes the difference."[9]

New York, June 30 1993, video clip, *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI0xmcaUNdE (accessed July 28 2015).

[4] Ice T as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack."

[5] Ice T as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack."

[6] "1990s Commercial: Keystone beer, 'Wouldn't it be great if...,'" publication date July 6 2014, video clip, DailyMotion, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x20ycms_1990s-commercial-keystone-beer-wouldn-t-it-be-great-if_tv (accessed July 30 2015).

[7] Ice T as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack."

[8] Ice T as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack."

[9] Rev. Calvin O. Butts III as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack."

In this forum, Ice T mobilized a mid-1980s narrative used by moral reformers – that Rap was a language that could reach young Americans and address their concerns – to convince the panel that Rap was politically useful. Ice T cited his many visits to penitentiaries and urban schools where he interacted with those who dealt with economic instability, police surveillance, and the pressures to choose illicit forms of employment (drug dealing and pimping) and community engagement (gang life). Ice T disclosed,

> I go to the penitentiaries. I talk to the brothers that are stuck and ain't comin' out. Why? Cause I talk in their language. I talk in the dialogue of the streets. […] When I go to schools, I talk to the kids about drugs, crime and how not to get involved with it. […] The audience that I attracted were the kids that did not listen to anybody else.[10]

Ice T claimed that Rap resonated with youth because they thought rappers understood their world in a way that older Americans did not. The rapper maintained that young people were distrustful of anyone "with a suit and a tie" who offered interpretations of their realities and solutions to their problems. He claimed that the youth respected rappers because they authenticated youth realities within the popular culture landscape. Ice T argued that if rappers were to adopt the position of the Black church, Black middle class and Civil Rights generation, it would "leave a whole sector of people that listen to music out in the open cause they ain't gonna listen to you no matter what you say."[11]

This chapter explores the above noted tensions over Rap by analyzing two widely publicized events of the mid-1990s that took place in the nation's capital and centered debates over Rap discourses, generational conflict and Black solidarity politics. The first is the 1994 Congressional Hearings on Gangsta Rap. The second is the Million Man March which took place on October 16, 1995. In these conversations, public perceptions of the Hip Hop generation and

[10] Ice T as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack."
[11] Ice T as quoted in, "Video Music Box Special: Censorship? Rap Under Attack."

Rap practitioners were somewhat consistent in that Rap supposedly reflected a set of pathologies that required the attention of 'the black community.' In some cases, Rap was imagined as symptomatic of broader communal and national moral and ethical failings, while in other moments Rap was scapegoated for initiating and promoting those very deficiencies. Both of these case studies explore how an increasingly demonized Rap genre became a screen on which debates over the many intersectional modes of Blackness – class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and space – were explored in (white) public spaces in the final decade of the twentieth century.

This chapter argues that in the latter twentieth century, differently situated African Americans publicly articulated anxieties over a lack of control over public representations of blackness in a nation where blackness was continually imagined as inferior. During the 1994 Congressional Hearing on Gangsta Rap and the Million Man March, the voices present in these debates reflected a broad cross section of the African American community – rappers, Rap fans, music industry executives, television and radio personalities, journalists, civil rights and women's rights organizers, politicians, religious leaders, and high school and university-level educators. In the conversations among these debaters about Rap music, the work of rappers became a screen on which African Americans negotiated how they wanted to be narrated to the American public. These debaters also discussed the degree to which they were willing to negotiate the borders around what constituted 'appropriate' blackness in the American mainstream – especially given that these debates also informed the consciousness of white people and the broader national debate about race and power. These cases were just as much about the nature of Black interiorities, as they were about questioning who (in the case of rappers) was well-suited to speak on behalf of African American interests.

These two public debates – which were about Rap music and were also beyond Rap music – demonstrated what was gained and lost when African Americans engaged in public conversations in white spaces about representations of blackness. At times, this meant that African American critics and supporters of Rap music complicated and nuanced expressions of blackness. They did so by stressing a vision of 'the black community' that was intersectional in order to challenge and disrupt simplistic and conservative definitions of black community politics. They did so while also producing space for voices that were continually silenced, erased and expunged – whether they were youth, urban dwellers, the black working and workless poor, women and/or queer people. In other instances, Rap critics narrated the genre and its practitioners as antagonistic and engaged in efforts to undermine Black solidarity and tarnish blackness in public discourse. Unlike those who were willing to expand the definition of 'the black community' and 'acceptable' performances, other Rap critics produced critiques that monitored, contained and eliminated the nuances inherent in 'the Black community.' In doing so, these critics used the debate over Rap music to stress the supposed simplicity of Black identity. By using conversations about Rap in this manner, African American critics and supporters of the genre engaged in critical debates about black popular culture while also drawing attention to the constantly changing, 'unruly' and always-unpredictable nature of African American identity politics and communal belonging.

Thick and Thin Black Solidarities in Post-Civil Rights America

The 1990s conflicts over Gangsta Rap were characteristic of a decade fraught with identitarian tensions, flux and introspection, and an ongoing search for order. Deborah Gray White argues that in the late twentieth century, Americans were struggling to address, adapt to and reconcile forces of post-modernity such as migration, multiculturalism, feminism, globalization,

deindustrialization, and the information technology revolution. These subjects inspired varied understandings of self, and wide-ranging negotiations over personal and collective freedom and belonging to the nation. This lack of stability created heightened individual angst and group tension, as well as a desire among many Americans to achieve stability, order and control over their own lives. For African American communities, the post-Civil Rights and Black Power terrain ushered in a period of disintegration and even greater disruptions such as an expansion of the black middle class just as the incarcerated and the black working and workless poor experienced growing isolation. White contends that these transformations left many African Americans feeling unmoored.[12]

The 1990s was also a period of ambivalence on the issue of Black solidarity politics particularly on questions of class, gender and generation. White maintains that this gap was most apparent between the black affluent/middle class and the Black working and workless poor. She argues that the black middle class was troubled by white America's inability to differentiate between disparate black classes and intersectional identity politics. White suggests that middle class black people grew resentful of being held responsible for the black working and workless poor – namely, the responsibility of monitoring and rehabilitating their supposed pathologies. White contends that the black middle class recognized that despite the continuous rhetoric (and façade) of late twentieth century colourblindness, the proverbial playing field remained uneven. She contends that the black middle class was also angry at the black working and workless poor for supposedly failing to cope with and overcome the conditions in which they found themselves. These middle class frustrations over issues of race and representation were rooted in both white racism and what the black middle class imagined as black lower-class irresponsibility. White

[12] Deborah Gray White, *Lost in the USA: American Identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 2-4, 10, 15-17, 21.

argues that those in working class constituencies interpreted the landscape differently. The black working and workless poor imagined the black middle class as privileged, content, American Dream-prone, and the beneficiaries of a politics of colourblindness.[13]

In the 1990s, debates over Rap revealed that two broad categories of black solidarity continued to constitute the main fault line and tension within late twentieth century black discourses and politics. Tommie Shelby argues that black solidarity has historically been rooted in a collective racial (read Black) identity and shared oppression. This definition of black solidarity has been treated as common sense, empirically adequate, analytically cogent, morally legitimate and politically salient. And yet, black communities have faced considerable difficulty establishing a stable political solidarity due to divergent interests, values and priorities along ethno-cultural, gender, sexuality, religious, and political lines.[14] Richard Iton argues that due to these variability, African American communities have been structured and defined by a particular subset of rules and borders to which specific public benefits were allocated and beneficiaries were identified. In the late twentieth century, African American maneuvers around solidarity tended to include the exclusion or expulsion of the gendered other, the management of class difference vis-à-vis nostalgic construction, and the mocking and excommunication of the 'nigger.'[15]

Whether in public, semi-public or private spaces, black solidarities can work towards establishing black humanness by sustaining universalities, liberties and democracy. Within the modernity/coloniality matrix, these solidarities – what Iton calls thin and thick conceptions of black solidarity – should be interpreted as contestational responses and performances to the problem of

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[13] White, *Lost in the USA: American Identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 46-47.
[14] Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 2, 4, 137.
[15] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131-132, 149, 185-186, 193-194.

coloniality and governmentality in America. Iton argues that thick and thin solidarities structure Black interiorities and solidarities according to or against the governmentalities that define their being and inscribe the distance between 'the citizen' (understood exclusively as the political persona) and the black body. Thick and thin solidarities help onlookers determine what value and limits are assigned to 'citizen' as a keyword and practice, and to what degree the black discourses and politics of the era are reflexive, transgressive or ambivalent. Iton maintains that in the post-Civil Rights era, Black artists used their mediums and artefacts to create templates and arguments meant to engage and challenge the dominant flow of black inferiority narratives.[16]

In late twentieth century debates on race and power, thin solidarities were used to reinforce discourses of respectability and defend against the recognition that coloniality produces blackness as marginalized and inferior on the basis of race. Shelby argues that thin conceptions of African American identity have centered on the historical phenomena of chattel slavery and Jim Crow segregation, as well as the supposedly easily identifiable phenotypic profiles (dark skin, curled hair, a broad flat nose, and thick lips) of black bodies to claim biological and ancestral heritage to continental Africa. Shelby maintains that according to this definition, blackness cannot be diminished or erased by one's colour, gender, sex, class or spatial location.[17] Iton argues that these solidarities entail representing 'the black community' in the singular, and therefore as a closed, coherent and manageable text. Rather than expand that which can be defined as 'Black,' these solidarities disarticulate attempts to problematize the space between how blackness is imagined and represented. In the place of efforts to investigate, expand, and deliberate over the definition of blackness, some members of the African American community mobilize discourses of

[16] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 131-132, 149, 185-186, 192-194.
[17] Shelby, *We Who Are Dark,* 208.

respectability (which mimic the *duppy state),* and in doing so grant power to the colonial gaze which becomes incontestable yet again.[18]

Iton maintains that thin solidarities are central to reinforcing the power of the *duppy state*. That is, thin solidarities produce a series of silences and attempts to manage, contain and eliminate difference within the category of 'blackness' that is mapped by colour, class, gender, sex and nation. Any attempt to gesture towards these differences, nuances and complexities is labelled as antagonistic to black solidarity and an act of race treason. Iton maintains that these accusations require the containment, exclusion, suppression and derogation of particular voices within black communities that do not obviously and/or neatly align with structural power. Therefore, thin solidarities entail practices and performances that maintain the racial/colonial matrix, as well as attempts to erase and subsume Black interiorities that are invested in deliberative efforts to reveal the means by which post-coloniality might be imagined and realized.[19]

For thin solidarities to function at maximum capacity, they require the use of nostalgia. These processes entail mobilizing a narrative of reminiscing and yearning for a "simpler" arrangement – that is, wishing for an 'uncomplicated' class, gender, and/or sexual order, or designing 'the black community' according to a hierarchical generational structure. The most common expression of this nostalgia is the circulation of respectability discourses which center class-based thin solidarities. Iton maintains that in the 1970s, many African Americans mobilized respectability discourses to achieve black communal cohesion. This middle class-based nostalgic turn was strengthened due to the disrupting effects of Reagan-era politics, the growing influence of the crack cocaine trade in black spaces, nation-wide income stratification present in and across African American communities, and the inability of Black leaders to respond to these large

[18] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 131-132, 149-150, 185-186, 192-194.
[19] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 131-132, 149-150, 185-186, 192-194.

structural issues in any coordinated manner. By the 1980s and 1990s, the struggle over gender and sex also contributed to the nostalgic turn, in that some members of Black America longed for and romanticized earlier periods of heteronormativity. These voices tended to castigate those who lobbied for gender and sex rights as race traitors who were willing to air the community's 'dirty laundry' and undermine black solidarity.[20]

Thick solidarities on the other hand challenge the portrayal of 'the black community' as a simple entity and produce space for voices that are continually silenced, erased and expunged. Shelby contends that while thick conceptions include aspects of thin definitions of blackness, they require additional identity elements that nuance and complicate thin conceptions of blackness.[21] Iton argues that thick solidarities attempt to challenge and disrupt conservative constructions of the relationship among the properties of blackness, sexuality, gender, class and nationality performances. These solidarities always contain thickly cosmopolitan aspirations toward the convivial, and as such they provide individuals with an opportunity to render their intersectional modes of identification publicly visible and useful.[22] Paul Gilroy argues that conviviality, which is radically open to difference, makes a nonsense of closed, fixed, and reified identity. Instead, conviviality grants attention to the changing and always-unpredictable mechanisms of identity.[23] Thick solidarities allow individuals to self-narrativize and foster a sense of personal autonomy,

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[20] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 131-132, 149, 159, 160-162.
[21] Shelby, *We Who Are Dark,* 209.
[22] Paul Gilroy argues that unlike the concept of multiculturalism, conviviality does not describe the absence of racism or the triumph of tolerance. Rather, the term refers to how people (not all of whom are designated as 'citizen') cohabitate and interact in postcolonial spaces. In doing so, these inhabitants produce a space of multi-culture as an ordinary feature of social life. Sivamohan Valluvan maintains that conviviality creates a space whereby racial and ethnic difference is rendered commonplace without practicing the exclusive and culturally disaggregated production of difference that is exclusive to the modern/colonial project. For more on conviviality and interiorities, please see, Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004), xi; Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 149; and Sivamohan Valluvan, "Conviviality and Multiculture: A Post-Integration Sociology of Multi-ethnic Interaction," *YOUNG: Nordic Journal of Youth Research* 24:3 (2016): 208-209.
[23] Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004), xi.

potential and capacity. These thick solidarities also create opportunities to establish strategic black unity while also anticipating the possibility that race (as a social construction) and the structures (the racial/colonial matrix) that support its existence can be transcended.[24]

Scholars remind us that despite the power of thick solidarities to expand the category of blackness, underpinning the logic of 'the black community' is the notion that blackness does not circulate as human. Within a framework of conviviality, identities of racial and ethnic difference – which are genuinely 'unruly' – are less easily reduced to hierarchically indexed ethno-racial positions. These identities become more than 'authentic' and 'culturally separate.' And yet, despite the existence of identities of difference within convivial landscapes, these interiorities uphold presumably distinct, culturally indexed boundaries and limits demarcating each 'community' as fixed, homogenous, and discrete in its authenticity.[25] And so, both thick and thin notions of blackness co-exist. Sivamohan Valluvan reminds us that race, which is birthed out of colonial and structural racism as well as discursive and institutional logics, mark racialized (read non-white) bodies as non-normative, pathological and culturally deficient. Valluvan maintains that even if racialized identities are imagined as multiple in their modes of belonging, underpinning the logic of their inclusion is the notion that whiteness circulates as majoritarian and normative (and therefore human), while non-whiteness is imagined as inferior and unhuman.[26] Both Valluvan and Gilroy maintain that within a multicultural democracy, solidarity should avoid ethnic and racial absolutisms and instead take shape around a radically non-racial humanism that avoids the allure of automatic and pre-political uniformity (as in the case of thin solidarities). Valluvan and Gilroy contend that we must trouble all claims to communitarian identity that take shape in relation to the

[24] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic,* 189, 193-194.
[25] Gilroy, *After Empire,* xiv, 105; Valluvan, "Conviviality and Multiculture," 207-208.
[26] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 7–10; Valluvan, "Conviviality and Multiculture," 206-209.

nation, ethnicity and race to negotiate new ways of achieving solidarity.[27] The first of these debates, the 1994 Congressional Hearings on Gangsta Rap, reflects how some African Americans attempted to achieve these new modes of solidarity.

Capitol Hill Meets Gangsta Rap: The 1994 Congressional Hearings

In October 1993, Dr. C. Delores Tucker, the head of the National Political Congress of Black Women (NPCBW) and a Democratic National Committee member, wrote a letter to African American Senator Carol Moseley-Braun that initiated the 1994 Congressional Hearings on Gangsta Rap.[28] In the letter, Tucker stated: "I and the entire membership of the [NPCBW] are outraged over how our children are being bombarded with so many negative messages that undermine positive family values, our authority as parents, and the moral integrity of our nation. NPCBW is doing something about this!"[29] The NPCBW believed that Gangsta Rap lyrics and imagery threatened Black women's future political prosperity, distorted public perceptions of Black male/female relations, undermined Black familial and communal stability, and perpetuated cycles of low self-esteem among Black youth.[30] Beginning in December 1993, the NPCBW staged a number of anti-Gangsta Rap demonstrations at record stores in Washington, D.C. Following their third demonstration at music retailer Sam Goody (located four blocks away from the White House), Tucker, comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory, and local Baptist clergyman Bishop Thorpe were arrested for attempting to block the entrance. Tucker told the media that the NPCBW was not 'thought police' though they had gathered with their allies to "make [their] concerns heard

[27] Gilroy, *After Empire,* 8; Valluvan, "Conviviality and Multiculture," 208-209.
[28] "Black Women Crusade Against 'Gangsta Rap'," *Jet*, January 10 1994, 85:10, 15; and Bill Holland, "Gangsta Rap Protesters Stage 2nd Demonstration at D.C Sam Goody," *Billboard*, January 15 1994, 106: 3.
[29] Jordan A. Conway, "Living in a Gangsta's Paradise: Dr. C. DeLores Tucker's Crusade Against Rap Music in the 1990s," Master of Arts Thesis (Virginia: Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012), 26-27.
[30] Senate, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce*,* 1, 3.

about Gangsta Rap and misogynist lyrics that degrade and denigrate women."[31] The NPCBW's distaste for Gangsta Rap's "profane, derogatory and foul" references to women led to their public request that the government discuss how the nation would protect its youngest citizens.[32]

The Congressional Hearings on Gangsta Rap which took place on February 11 and May 5, 1994, were presided over by Cardiss Collins, an African American Democrat from Illinois. Collins argued that the hearings were not intended to legislate morality, censure artistry, or discuss the abridgement of First Amendment rights. Rather, they were a public forum to raise America's moral consciousness and corporate sensitivity. They were also meant to collect and analyze information and explore consumer concerns regarding Gangsta Rap's characterization as abusive, offensive, and violent.[33]

Tucker, the first witness at the hearings, argued that Gangsta Rap's gender politics brought shame to the 'black community' and abused the freedoms for which Black leaders had fought. She claimed that Gangsta Rap was "pornographic smut" that took advantage of the advances for which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, John Lewis, James Farmer, and Rosa Parker had risked their lives. She argued that these activists would be deeply saddened by Black musicians who misused their freedom of speech to dehumanize, demean, abuse and degrade Black women. Tucker conceded that she was present to remind hearing attendees that African American women were not objects of disdain. These women were grandmothers, mothers, sisters, aunts and daughters who demanded that their human decency and dignity be defended and protected.[34]

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[31] "Black Women Crusade Against 'Gangsta Rap'," *Jet*, January 10 1994, 85:10, 15; and Bill Holland, "Gangsta Rap Protesters Stage 2nd Demonstration at D.C Sam Goody," *Billboard*, January 15 1994, 106:3.
[32] Senate Committee on Music Lyrics and Commerce, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Competitiveness of the Committee on Energy and Commerce House of Representatives 103rd Congress, 2nd sess., February 11 and May 5 1994, Serial No. 103-112, (Washington, D.C: U.S Government Printing Office, 1994), 1, 3.
[33] Senate, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 1-2, 73-74.
[34] Dr. C. DeLores Tucker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 4,5.

Tucker contended that the music industry was financially incentivized to use Black youth and Rap music to destroy black life and communal solidarity. In Tucker's assessment of the relationship rappers had to the record industry (and record industry executives in particular), she gestured to what Katherine McKittrick has labelled "plantation logics."[35] Tucker maintained that the music industry was an exploitative capitalist enterprise that justified treating naïve Black youth as expendable commodities who could be coerced and encouraged to commit violence, use drugs and abuse women for profit. She accused marketplace gatekeepers of financing and promoting a form of cultural plague that was not unlike American slavery.[36] Tucker contended that "for 400 years profit came before principle as African Americans bore the brunt of [the] slave-masters' degradation."[37] She reasoned that Gangsta Rap focused on acquiring capital at the expense of the last vestiges of Black strength: the African American spirit, humanity and morality. Tucker also took issues with the genre's dehumanization of women, and she maintained that Rap's supposed infection of young minds was evidence of a social and psychological genocide.[38]

In the testimony that followed, Ernie Singleton, the President of MCA Records' Black Music Division, challenged Tucker's claim that rappers were exploited music industry pawns. Singleton objected to what he said was the subtext of the hearings: that there was a "cabal of rich white men sitting in big towers on Sixth Avenue, deciding that we [African Americans] should put

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[35] Dr. C. DeLores Tucker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 5, 22-23. By utilizing George Beckford's "plantation economy thesis" (1972), Katherine McKittrick argues that plantation logics – which are characteristic of (but not identical to) slavery – emerged after transatlantic slavery in both ideological and material ways. The plantation system, which is linked to a broader global economy that thrives on the "persistent underdevelopment" and "persistent poverty" of black life, lingered long after emancipation and independence movements in the Americas. McKittrick maintains that plantation logics shape many aspects and spaces of post-slave life in that they generated North Atlantic metropolitan wealth, exacerbated the dispossession of Black people, and instituted an incongruous racialized economy. For more on plantation logics see, Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," *Small Axe* 42 (November 2013): 3-4; George Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).
[36] Tucker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 5, 22-23.
[37] Tucker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 6,7.
[38] Tucker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 6,7.

these records out."[39] Unlike Tucker who argued that Rap music was driven by white corporate greed and pathological fantasies of Black people, Singleton maintained that Rap had largely remained a black independent product until 1987. He conceded that in some cases – namely where Rap had mainstreamed – Tucker's point stood. In many other moments, Rap largely circulated in local independent markets, and the genre was not governed by the politics and practices that Tucker had outlined. Singleton argued that even as Rap had mainstreamed, its creative and marketing process was not driven or in some cases affiliated with major corporations. Singleton claimed that Gangsta Rap – the newest Rap sub-genre – was still a Black-created, Black-directed, and Black-targeted product driven largely by Black entrepreneurs. He declared that unlike earlier forms of black popular music, Rap allowed Black Americans a point of entry to the industry from which they had been largely excluded.[40]

Along with gender politics and the exploitation of Black artists, hearing participants mobilized respectability politics to draw attention to the role that earlier African American generations must have in counselling 'wayward youth.' Joseph E. Madison, talk show host and NAACP board member, argued that the Civil Rights generations' opinions of rappers should be read as an act of love. They were asking Black youth to reject commerce driven imperatives to ensure that they retained their moral center. He contended, "I love young people, and it is because of that love […] that I have an obligation to counsel them on the damages of buying into an agenda of those who have no love or respect for our community."[41] Like Tucker, Madison reasoned that rappers had no real control over their cultural artefacts and they were being duped by industry executives to promote the "worst parts of black culture."[42] Madison argued that Black youth needed

[39] Ernie Singleton as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 54-55.
[40] Singleton as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 54-55.
[41] Joseph E. Madison as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 24-26.
[42] Madison as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 24-26.

counsel because they were not capable of understanding the real enemies of 'the black community,' or that women should be respected and that violence must be a last resort.[43]

Hearing participants also used respectability politics to root Gangsta Rap's practices in the behaviours of the poor and suggest that these parental, familial and community dynamics and strategies were pathological. While Singleton appeared to be defending Rap as a 'Black product,' he also argued,

> I believe the parental advisory logo and for that that matter, any labeling, is no substitute for responsible parenting. The morals and ethics of our society are slowly diminishing and that, Madam Chairwoman, is what I think needs to be addressed and changed. We must look at societal problems like our welfare system that encourages dependence and not empowerment. Societal disintegration starts with factors like these, not the music. […] but more specifically Rap music is like a storm. It will not diminish until the societal woes that these young men and women so eloquently express in their music are attended to. […] I think that no one here will disagree with me when I say that families with strong parental figures, quality education, caring communities and real jobs is what is needed. These are some of the solutions to the problems of violence in our society. Ensuring the existence of those factors in the lives of young people involves some tough decisions at the governmental level and some tough decisions at the personal level. We can't simply abdicate our responsibilities as parents, legislators, or citizens by singling out a few TV programs, a few movies or a few musical recordings."[44]

According to Singleton, blaming rappers was reductionist and failed to address the broader societal issues that rappers captured in their lyricism.[45]

As some hearing participants extended an ethics of care in their discussion of Gangsta Rap, they did so in ways that reinscribed their authority to define a singular 'black community.' For example, Dionne Warwick, a Soul musician and NPCBW member, admitted that she was troubled by how these musicians – whom she claimed as "our children" – engaged in their own degradation by encouraging and normalizing violence, abuse and sexism. She declared, "when will

[43] Madison as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 24-26.
[44] Singleton as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 37-38.
[45] Singleton as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 37.

responsibility be demanded by all to deny the continuing images that degrade our dignity, insult our families, stunt the emotions of our children, and most importantly, our communities?"[46] Like Tucker, Warwick argued that rappers perpetrated a cycle of low self-esteem among Black youth, undermined the stability of the black family, and distorted America's perception of black heterosexual relationships.[47] She maintained, "we have got to let them know that *Menace II Society* and *Boyz in the Hood* is [sic] not the totality of our experience as African Americans."[48] She was explicitly referring to New Black Realism film images and visually narrated experiences of 'the urban' that included murder, abuse, prostitution, youth pregnancy, and suicide. Warwick maintained that these representations advanced a one-dimensional portrayal of Black life. She then commended Tucker for initiating this conversation, "to support and provide insight into the process of reclaiming our youth. In doing so, we also reclaim our [black] communities and our [black] cultural heritage."[49]

As a number of witnesses discussed blackness and 'the inner city,' the issue of social disintegration appeared to generate greater understanding and empathy between the Civil Rights and Hip Hop generations. For example, Don Cornelius, host of the hugely popular *Soul Train* TV series, argued that hearing attendees should consider that it might be useful to create a rating system akin to the MPAA's (Motion Picture Association of America). This system distinguished supposed exploiters and panderers from 'legitimately' creative artists by clarifying genre formats and what content could be found in their products. Like Tucker and Singleton, Cornelius argued that the focus should be on eliminating the social conditions of poverty, violence, despair and hopelessness

[46] Dionne Warwick as quoted in, Senate, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 70.
[47] Dionne Warwick as quoted in, Senate, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 69-71.
[48] Warwick as quoted in, Senate, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 69-71; Steve Nicolaides, *Boyz n the Hood*, Directed by John Singleton. Culver City, California: Columbia Pictures, 1991; Darin Scott, *Menace II Society*, Directed by Allen and Albert Hughes (The Hughes Brothers). New York, NY: New Line Cinema, 1993.
[49] Warwick as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 69-71.

in low income African American communities that framed Gangsta Rap narratives.[50] Hip Hop journalist Nelson George echoed Cornelius' sentiments. He contended that Gangsta Rap was a product of urban economic and social dislocation and disintegration, the influx of AIDS, teenage unemployment, the availability of automatic weapons, and twelve years of unsympathetic Republican government. He insisted that Gangsta Rap was a verbal rebellion and the articulation of a deep cynicism regarding these structural inequities and the role the American government had played in sustaining these disparities. George rationalized that if critics attempted to understand the genre outside of this context, they would endow Gangsta rappers with a profound power they did not have. Here, George seemed to be undercutting rappers while also providing greater insight into the circumstances they described in their lyrics. George went on to argue that if Gangsta Rap messaging was removed from retailers, airwaves and media, this would not eliminate violence, unemployment, youth pregnancy and drug trafficking.[51] As David Harleston, President of Rush Associated Labels, argued in testimony that followed: "silencing the messenger will not extinguish the problem."[52]

Some witness statements also gestured towards how rappers used Rap's 'Terrordome' to carry on – perhaps even more effectively – the Civil Rights generation's legacy of critiquing the *duppy state*. For example, congresswoman Maxine Waters argued,

> Liberals and conservatives alike express a concern that Rap music causes violence, because the fear of crime and violence has spread its way out of the ghettos and into every single community in America today. […] Let's not kid ourselves. There are those who have a political agenda in seeking to distract people from other issues. Sometimes our friends, the conservatives, are having a field day. They have always believed Blacks cause most of the crime in America. After all, they say, look at the inordinately high number of Blacks in prisons and on death row. Now their evil propaganda stands virtually unopposed in today's public debate over Rap music.[53]

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[50] Don Cornelius as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 19-21.
[51] Nelson George as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 35-36.
[52] David Harleston as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 39.
[53] Maxine Waters as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 65.

Waters reminded hearing attendees that the anti-Rap rhetoric of the era reflected a suspicious, and perhaps deliberate, political campaign to heighten anxieties over black criminality and therefore rationalize black incarceration. Waters made it clear that these flat characterizations, lacking in nuance and context as they were, produced space for Rap critics to argue that rappers were playing right into the hands of conservatives. She told attendees that the public was being distracted from Gangsta Rap's true intent – to unmask the politics of black urban spaces and experiences.[54] She argued,

> It is not the words being used. It is the reality they are rapping about. For decades, you and I and so many others have talked about the lives and the hopes of our people, the pain and the hopelessness, the deprivation and abuse. Rap music is communicating that message like we never have.[55]

Here, Waters attempted to reconcile the existing gulf of misunderstanding by pointing out that rappers – who were often products of pain, hopelessness, deprivation, isolation and abuse – were also mobilizing Black geographies to contest the *duppy state*.

The hearing also demonstrated that the Civil Rights generation was willing to mobilize thick solidarities to grant space to Rap's 'Terrordome' readings and account for the concerns of a broad spectrum of black community members. Waters told hearing attendees,

> They are our children, I don't intend to throw them away, to demean them or to marginalize them, but rather, my responsibility and yours is to try as much as we can to understand and see what we can do, given that we have been given this opportunity to serve, to transform them. We must try and understand, and we must be able to articulate to America what they, too, are trying to articulate. […] And somehow we pretend it is not happening or it is somebody else's concern, and somehow these children are going to live in these situations and grow up to be wholesome adults who won't be angry, who won't cause us some problems.[56]

[54] Waters as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 65.
[55] Waters as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 65.
[56] Waters as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 63-64.

Waters asked anti-Gangsta Rap critics within the ranks of the Civil Rights generation to empathize with young Black rappers. She did not support their desire to discard and debase these musicians. Rather, she asked the Civil Rights generation to serve as a bridge of understanding and help rappers convey and clarify their messaging and intent. Waters maintained that rappers, "are not cold-blooded, non-caring criminals. These are your children and my children. These are young people who have been isolated and denied the opportunity to say who they are. They feel just as we feel."[57]

When hearing participants mobilized thick solidarities, they generated dialogic space between and among black generations to assess Civil Rights nostalgia, highlight the incomplete work of Black liberation, and interrogate Rap readings of the *duppy state*. David Harleston, president of RUSH Associated labels, argued that Gangsta rappers were right to critique the Civil Rights generation because the goals of the movement were not fully realized and the struggle was not over.[58] He argued,

> What is curious is that Gangsta rappers, as they have been characterized here today, are telling us that the work is not done. Gangsta rappers as they have been described here today, are telling us we have got to keep moving, because the demands that we imposed on this country and this government in the 1960s have not been met, and if we think that the struggle or the fight is over, we are kidding ourselves. And that message is profoundly important. So certainly we feel a sense of social responsibility. We feel it to the community that includes the very kids who are making us aware of what is going on in this music.[59]

Harleston understood Gangsta Rap to be an articulation and problematization rather than a celebration of the many issues plaguing African American communities. He reasoned, "I don't think the response [to Gangsta Rap] is making a lot of sense, because the response is, let's stop the

[57] David Harleston as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 69.
[58] Harleston as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 50.
[59] Harleston as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 50.

expression or the definition of the articulation of the problem, rather than what I think it should be, which is let's address the problem."[60]

Among all the invited participants, the only rapper who was asked to speak on behalf of the genre and provide greater context and clarity regarding Rap's language and intention was a Black woman. Despite the fact that mainstream Rap was overwhelmingly framed by male voices, Rapper Yolanda "Yo Yo" Whitaker (the protégé of Ice Cube, and a featured actress in *Boyz n the Hood* and *Menace II Society*) was the only rapper to provide a witness statement. She argued that the problems anti-Rap critics identified "didn't start from a cassette tape."[61] She maintained that many anti-Rap critics misunderstood the genre's intent because their interpretation lacked contextualization. She claimed,

> I am here to help you understand that there is a thing called context. When our lyrics are taken out of context, they take on a whole new meaning that you interpret as violence. There is a language difference from 20 years ago to now. Words change. We have a totally different meaning for the language we speak. That is why, if you don't understand, ask, and we will take the time to explain. […] If you don't, our generation is lost. Those who block our music and refuse to take the whole story will never understand. […] Why is the so-called negative Rap so popular? It is because negativity is what surrounds us. The true Rap listeners are surrounded by the negativity in the neighbourhood and until you can help our situation, don't criticize the way we feel.[62]

Yo Yo's statement recalled earlier conflicts that rappers had regarding language with moral reformers in the 1980s, and with state actors, elites and the press who decontextualized their analysis of *duppy state* practices in the free speech controversies of the early 1990s. She maintained that the Hip Hop generation was "the product of [the] America your generation created."[63] She begged: "Don't shut us down. Hear us out. Now is the time to focus on the real villains, not the

[60] Harleston as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 50.
[61] Yolanda "YoYo" Whitaker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 40-41.
[62] Whitaker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 40-41.
[63] Whitaker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 40-41, 52.

Rap artists."[64] Yo Yo argued that "Rap cannot be the scapegoat" in a conversation that should address the root causes rappers had outlined such as unemployment, poor education, a lack of home discipline, teen pregnancy, AIDS, homelessness, violence and incarceration.[65] Yo Yo maintained that the subtext of this hearing – a generational misunderstanding – was the result of the Civil Rights generation's presumption that the Hip Hop generation was ungrateful for their sacrifices.[66]

Three months after the initial hearing, a multi-racial cohort from the Hip Hop generation opened the follow-up hearing by drawing attention to the disparate readings of Rap music among rappers across the United States. On May 5, 1994, members of *In The Mix*, a weekly WNYC-TV reality television series hosted by a multi-racial teenage cast on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), provided witness statements about Hip Hop culture and youth issues. At the hearing, Marvin J. Coleman, the show's outreach coordinator, delivered episode footage that featured interview material from a number of artists, members of the media and industry executives from the American east coast. However, none of these rappers were present to defend themselves. Prior to showing the footage, episode producers clarified that they had asked Hip Hop pioneers to discuss Rap's violent imagery and misogyny because they believed that their interpretations would be insightful, motivating and informative. In the footage, interviewees suggested that Rap's content was narrowly bound and commercially driven by the music industry.[67] Doug E. Fresh argued that, "back in the day […] you had a rainbow of styles. But now since the money is looked at as coming from one avenue [Gangsta Rap], it's like everybody is trying to rush to get through that door."[68]

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[64] Whitaker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 40-41, 52.
[65] Whitaker as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 40-41, 52.
[66] Senate, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 40-41, 52.
[67] The interviewee's featured in the episode included: DJ Kool Herc, DJ Grandmaster Flash, DJ Kevie Kev Rockwell, DJ Grandwizard Theodore, the Coldcrush Brothers (rappers), Whoodini (rapper), Doug E. Fresh (beatboxer), MC Lyte (rapper), Tragedy the Intelligent Hoodlum (rapper), Alan Light (music editor of *Vibe* Magazine), and Lesley Pitts (director of promotions at Jive Records). Marvin J. Coleman as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 76, 80-81, 100.
[68] Doug E. Fresh as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 78-83.

Deejay Grand Wizard Theodore conceded, "[when] people think of Hip Hop these days, they think of a guy walking around with a pistol or disrespecting girls. No, that's not Hip Hop."[69] These Hip Hop pioneers rationalized that early artists were not primarily driven by greed and status, and the artform's original intent did not include violence, sexism or misogyny. They maintained that these were the attributes of Rap flooding the airwaves – content that was largely imagined as Gangsta Rap. Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar maintains that this internal critique complicated the controversy because Hip Hop pioneers offered a strident and unabashed denunciation of Gangsta Rap. In doing so, these practitioners indicted Gangsta Rap of discrimination, exploitation and bastardization for profit.[70]

The witness statements quickly shifted to deflect attention away from the issue of corporate or artist ethics to the marketplace and audience responsibility to broaden the burden of Rap's social responsibility. Paris Eley, Senior Vice President of Motown Records, argued that Motown had always promoted socially responsible artistry. He referenced as evidence the music of Diana Ross, Marvin Gaye, and Stevie Wonder; the humor of Richard Pryor; and the Civil Rights speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Eley rejected the accusation that Motown was morally liable for irresponsible Rap messaging. He cited the label's 1994 roster as proof: socially conscious female rappers Queen Latifah, MC Trouble and Teena Marie; and pre-teen New Jack Swing quintuplet Another Bad Creation. Eley accused society at large for failing to eradicate sexism.[71] He contended that, "misogyny has no more right to hide behind artistry than does bigotry. […] We must exercise greater vigilance as a society to avoid aiding and abetting the spread of either."[72] Eley suggested that consumers were also responsible given that marketplace decisions regarding artistic content

[69] Deejay Grand Wizard Theodore as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 78-83.
[70] Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, "Slouching Toward Bork: The Culture Wars and Self-Criticism in Hip-Hop Music," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (November 1999), 166.
[71] Paris Eley as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 128-129, 140.
[72] Eley as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 128-129, 140.

were shaped by audience demand. Eley argued that record companies were not the primary source of youth morality. He contended that these Rap consumers – with their "troubled" personalities – were being shaped by spaces that promoted bigoted opinions and practices. He cited "broken" homes, places of worship, and neighbourhood interactions as evidence.[73]

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) also defended themselves against hearing accusations that the record industry produced cultural artefacts that were exploitative, as well as ethically and socially irresponsible. Hilary Rosen, the President of the RIAA, informed the hearing committee that the RIAA had revised the parental advisory logo. The new logo would be standardized in size and affixed to the bottom right corner of any album's permanent packaging underneath the cellophane shrink-wrap. Rosen stated, "compliance [was] the most effective way to exercise artistic rights while also exercising social responsibility."[74] She informed the committee that the RIAA sent a memo and fact sheet to the heads of more than 250 labels to remind them of the proper use of the logo. This decision was accompanied by the formation of an ad hoc committee to discuss the effectiveness of the Parental Advisory Program and chart a course for the future. Given the 2 Live Crew and Ice T cases years earlier, the RIAA agreed that they must aid retailers to make informed decisions and begin a comprehensive consumer awareness program aimed at educating parents about the logo. Rosen reported that the RIAA had initiated an internal dialogue with their companies and artists to advise them of the concerns expressed by legislators and political leaders. Rosen maintained, "there should be little doubt as to how seriously the industry takes this program."[75]

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[73] Eley as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 128-129, 140.
[74] Hilary Rosen as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 130-131.
[75] Rosen as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 130-131.

Despite hearing statements pointing to the socially responsible actions that various industry representatives had taken, Cardiss Collins was unconvinced of their sincerity. Even as she called Eley and Rosen to approach the bench to testify, she could be heard on microphone stating softly to Florida Rep. Cliff Stearns, "they are guilty as hell."[76] While the statement was clearly audible in the recorded proceedings, it was not printed in the official hearing transcript, nor was it widely discussed in the press.[77] This sentiment of disbelief followed a question that Collins asked in her opening statements during the May 5th hearing. In that statement Collins noted that what bothered her most about the justifications given for the abusive lyrics was that the music industry had the capacity to release "clean or sanitized" versions of the same recordings. She asked, "now if you can put out and sell clean versions, why not just do that, just put out the clean versions?"[78] The logic that the music industry was not responsible for "unclean" Rap music, but took credit for releasing sanitized and unclean versions seemed incompatible to Collins.

Making up the hearing's final panel were Professors Tricia Rose and Robin D.G. Kelley, two academics with expertise in Hip Hop culture who helped contextualize Rap music's gender relations. Kelley, then a professor of History and African American studies at the University of Michigan, explained that,

> While I do agree that sexism and sexist language is a serious problem among African Americans and in U.S society as a whole, to begin to deal with this issue, we need to establish at least three things: one, Rap music in particular draws on much older traditions of sexist vernacular culture that has to be under[stood] historically; two, that misogynistic language in popular music is a symptom of the culture and circumstances we live in rather than the cause of sexist behavior; and, three, that censorship will not alleviate sexism.[79]

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[76] Cardiss Collins as quoted in, C-Span, "Music Lyric Regulation and Rap Music: May 5 1994," http://www.c-span.org/video/?56594-1/music-lyric-regulation-rap-music&showFullAbstract=1 (accessed August 26 2014).
[77] C-Span, "Music Lyric Regulation and Rap Music: May 5 1994," http://www.c-span.org/video/?56594-1/music-lyric-regulation-rap-music&showFullAbstract=1 (accessed August 26 2014).
[78] Cardiss Collins as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 74.
[79] Robin D.G. Kelley as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 144.

Kelley contended that Black communities have derived both pleasure and fear from these horrific tales of gendered defiance and nihilism precisely because they are compelling, total, and mythic. He argued that Rap music drew on the tradition of masculinized "baaadman" tales to articulate resistance to racism and various embodiments of authority such as police and government officials. That said, these narratives of Black masculinity were never intended to be read as mirrors nor prescriptions for actual gender relations. Kelley maintained that while hearing attendees should not condone Gangsta Rap lyricism and behavior, they should endeavor to understand the roots of the genre's supposed pathology.[80] Rose, then an assistant professor of History and Africana studies at New York University, agreed. She conceded that Rap had been rightfully lambasted for its sexism, even as it had been wrongfully characterized as thoroughly sexist. She reasoned that, "these extreme behaviours are part of a spectrum of sexist practice. […] Abusive and misogynistic language in contemporary popular culture is part of a much larger and very complex process of devaluing and oppressing women in American society."[81]

As these academic experts weighed in on the discussion, they questioned the timing and use of the public's anti-Rap critique regarding gender relations. Kelley and Rose questioned whether the anti-Gangsta Rap critique was calculated. Rose stated, "I am highly skeptical of the timing and strategic deployment of outrage regarding Rap sexism. Some responses to sexism in Rap music adopt a tone which suggest that rappers have somehow infected an otherwise sexism-free society."[82] Kelley echoed Rose: "the idea that male dominance is normal, particularly within

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[80] Robin D.G. Kelley as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 144-145.
[81] Tricia Rose as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 144-145.
[82] Rose as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 146; Though it was not publicly acknowledged during testimony, the hearings took place during a Congressional election year in which Democrats endured endless attacks from Republicans for the Whitewater controversy, the Paula Jones sexual harassment case connected to President Clinton and health care reform among other issues. For more on these subjects see, William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 498-500.

the context of a patriarchal family, is not new nor is it a product of Rap music."[83] Kelley stated that given these public critiques, it was important to contextualize Rap's gender performances and practices. He reminded hearing attendees that the shift to a post-industrial economy compromised the economic potential of African American men. It also drove many Black men in urban neighbourhoods to target African American women with criticisms that sounded like the condemnations of critics such as Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (in his 1965 "Moynihan Report") and Clarence Thomas (in his sexist vilification of Anita Hill during the 1991 Senate hearings).[84]

The final statement in the written transcript of the hearing came from Professor George Lipsitz who argued that anti-Gangsta Rap critiques reinforced the demonization of urban spaces and racialized youth, as well as delegitimized and undermined their observations of power in America. Lipsitz, then a Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California Santa Barbara, did not testify before the committee but submitted his statement to the committee as a letter. He argued that these hearings would lead to three problematic outcomes:

> I believe that using this public forum merely to discourage the music industry from producing Gangsta Rap songs will only increase the appeal of these songs among the young. It will encourage the journalists, politicians and social scientists who have demonized inner city youths in order to hide the social disintegration caused by two decades of neoconservative economics and politics. Most important, it will forfeit a positive opportunity to enlist young people in collective efforts to transform themselves and their society because it demonstrates a total lack of comprehension and consideration for their concerns and their culture. Starting a discussion by attempting to suppress the other side will do little to repair the intergenerational ruptures that this issue exposes so forcefully.[85]

[83] Kelley as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 145.
[84] Kelley as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 146, 151.
[85] George Lipsitz as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 153.

Lipsitz explained, "I have learned that it is a mistake to talk without listening, to assume that their stances do not contain a grain of truth or that they do not serve important purposes for them."[86] He added that racialized youth faced a dire reality: "[They are] unwanted as citizens, underfunded as students and unemployed as workers. Minority youth seem wanted only by the criminal justice system."[87]

Lipsitz used the notion of generational difference to reconcile the gap of misunderstanding between the Civil Rights and Hip Hop generations and clarify that Rap's 'Terrordome' unmasked the falsehood of racial progress in the age of mass incarceration. He explained,

> My experiences […] with young people over the past 5 years have exposed me to an unrelenting cynicism among young people; many of them expect the worst of everything and everybody. But this is a view they have learned in our society. […] I think this is why conversations between the Civil Rights generation and today's young people are so difficult, why so often we seem to be talking past each other. People who witnessed the transformations of the 1960's witnessed terrible atrocities, but they had the advantage of seeing ordinary people take history into their own hands and bring about some changes.[88]

Lipsitz contended that unlike the Civil Rights generation, the Hip Hop generation was discouraged by the lack of transformative change in their lifetime. In their lyrics, Gangsta Rap artists depicted racialized communities "living in a jungle," and accepting the bitterness of their working and workless poor reality because there was little promise or possibility to achieve the American Dream. He argued that Gangsta Rap creators mobilized this artistic cynicism as a kind of cathartic practice and source of alternative economics. Lipsitz contended that Gangsta rappers were aware that they had "take[n] capitalism without sugar."[89]

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[86] Lipsitz as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 153.
[87] Lipsitz as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 153.
[88] Lipsitz as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 154.
[89] Lipsitz as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 154-155.

In their intervention, academics suggested that hearing participants should work towards coalition building with rappers rather than scapegoating them so as not to confirm their existing suspicions about the powerful. In the final sentences of Lipsitz' statement, he argued that hearing attendees should take Gangsta Rap's b(l)ack looking seriously. He also suggested that unless those in attendance wanted to confirm Rap suspicions about power, it would be wise to work with rappers to tackle the problems they have outlined. He argued,

> Condemning Gangster Rap without offering opportunities for young people to address and redress their grievances only plays into its hands. It will add to its prestige by showing the outside world to be as ruthless, unforgiving and unyielding as the Gangster rappers suspect. It gives them something to be against, but nothing to be for. A better way is to not take the bait, to not scapegoat a few artists and their audiences for the social disintegration we are now experiencing, but rather to build a coalition with young people, using what they already know about the world to battle together for a redistribution of wealth and power that will provide a compelling alternative to gangsterism in music and in social life.[90]

Like Waters, Harleston, Yo Yo and Kelley, Lipsitz contended that critics were duly responsible for understanding and addressing the root causes of social dislocation that rappers referenced in their artefacts.

Recruiting the Future: the Million Man March and the Hip Hop Generation

Seven months after the Congressional hearing, a kite bearing the black, red and green colors of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) fluttered above the Capitol steps in Washington, D.C. On that cold mid-October morning, Nation of Islam crowd monitors were stationed approximately every 50 yards along the road. Dressed in conservative suits with red bow ties and armbands, these men directed pedestrian traffic, fielded any questions and sold

[90] Lipsitz as quoted in, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 155.

the Nation of Islam's newspaper *Final Call* to any visitors who requested a copy.[91] The streets were also filled with smells of homemade sweet potato pies and curried and jerk chicken as vendors sold an array of African trinkets, Afrocentric books, buttons, bumper stickers, hats, and t-shirts to arriving visitors. Each of these items commemorated the day's event, the Million Man March, which was organized by Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam (NOI). As visitors looked around, they could see the phrases "I Came To the Million Man March" and "One Million Strong" on merchandise and hand-made placard signs all around them.[92] Amid the traditional protest paraphernalia were new technological innovations that had never been part of the Civil Rights marches of the 1960s. Marchers carried cellular phones, miniature color televisions, and personal video cameras to document the event and communicate with those who could not be present.[93] There were also dozens of voter registration booths which were largely staffed by female volunteers and protestors conveying the importance of voting.[94] Among these protestors was Harold Brown, a man dressed in a costume that depicted his body carried in a trash can by a bald-headed white man. Brown walked the streets and yelled: "You got to vote! Stop doing drugs. Stop killing one another. Or this is where we'll end up in the future – in the white man's garbage can."[95]

While the Million Man March was meant to help a wide range of Black men center their experiences, the event recruited a largely older, middle-class, better-educated, and more religious

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[91] John M. Broder, "Million Man March: A Sea of Humanity Swells With Hope and Celebration: Scene: Thousands Joyously Embrace as Brothers. They Ponder How to Use Their Newfound 'Power and Promise," *Los Angeles Times,* October 17 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-17/news/mn-57951_1_million-man-march (accessed on August 27 2015).
[92] Broder, "Million Man March: A Sea of Humanity Swells"; Adario Strange, "One In A Million: One Man's Journey Through Truth, Self-Determination and the Future," *The Source*, January 1996, 62; Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York, NY: St. Martins Press, 2005), 402.
[93] Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 402.
[94] Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 402.
[95] Harold Brown as quoted in, Broder, "Million Man March: A Sea of Humanity Swells."

Black male constituency who desired personal transformation.[96] Farrakhan's rhetoric challenged African American men to reclaim their position as patriarchs in order to strengthen and 'save' black families, neighbourhoods, and communities. Deborah Gray White argues that marchers appeared to be unbothered by Farrakhan's controversial and divisive solidarity politics – namely his anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity, sexism, and homophobia. White maintains that many attendees were drawn to the event's message. They were also troubled by public representations of black masculinity, and the impact of American racism on poverty, the prison industrial complex, and the murder rate of Black men.[97] White suggests that the March's theme of atonement and reconciliation reflected the anti-institutionalism of the "psychospiritual revolution" of the 1990s.[98] Like earlier Black nationalist movements, the March urged participants to take up a politics of racial uplift and unity that did not situate blame for American race relations on structural inequalities. White contends that the March challenged Black men to turn inward and consider their role in the conditions that 'the Black community' faced. Like the moral reformers discussed in Chapter 3, march organizers asked participants to embrace a position of self-reflexivity and personal responsibility. Organizers did so to defy negative stereotypes and promote the image of a disciplined, self-controlled, non-submissive and yet positive black masculinity. White maintains

[96] Despite the March organizers' publicly articulated attempt to recruit among the ranks of the Hip Hop generation, Deborah Gray White maintains that marchers had an average median household income of $43,000; 62 percent of marchers were between the ages of 30 to 60; more than 70 percent of marchers had some college education, were college graduates, and/or had a postgraduate education; and 52 percent identified as protestant (while only 7 percent were Catholic, 6 percent were Muslim, 5 percent belonged to the Nation of Islam, and 14 percent reported that they had no religious affiliation). For more information on the March's demographic, see, White, *Lost in the USA: American Identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 43-44.

[97] White, *Lost in the USA: American Identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 20, 23-24, 44, 47, 52, 61-62.

[98] White suggests that the "psychospiritual revolution" led believers to turn their attention towards inner growth and personal responsibility in order to produce transformation and change and reconcile what they believed was missing in their everyday world. For more information on the "psychospiritual revolution," see, White, *Lost in the USA*, 22.

that while the March was not entirely a response to Gangsta Rap, it was in part, an attempt to resist public anxieties about Gangsta Rap's supposedly nihilistic images.[99]

The relationship that the Hip Hop generation had to Black Islam preceded the Million Man March and was rooted in an urban movement focused on black male identity politics and performances, and a desire to influence the fates and futures of black urban youth.[100] One of the ways the Hip Hop generation learned about the NOI's doctrine was through their relationship to the Five Percent Nation (as discussed earlier in the introduction).[101] DJ Kool Herc explained that

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[99] White, *Lost in the USA*, 20, 23-24, 44, 47, 52, 61-62.

[100] The Nation of Islam (NOI) was founded by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad in Detroit, Michigan in 1930. The organization focused on black racial pride, personal discipline and economic uplift as part of an unorthodox interpretation of the Islamic faith. In the 1930s, the organization was publicly identified by its attacks against white America, labeling whites as "devils." By the 1950s, the organization focused its attention on white supremacy and rebuilding black dignity and black economics, while also disputing the effectiveness of Civil Rights bills, picket lines and standard protests. In the post-Civil Rights era, the NOI was centrally important to re-spatializing Black identity. By using terms such as "Asiatic Black nation" and "Afro-Asiatic Black man" to suggest that Black men are "the maker, the owner, [...] the father of civilization, [and] god of the universe," Black Muslims helped redefine African American identity in relation to the larger 'Third World'/Global South. By claiming that Islam is "the religion of the Black man," the NOI detailed the devastation, dispossession and erasure of Black history vis-à-vis slavery, which many contend was legitimized by the introduction of Christianity into black communities. These rhetorical strategies allowed Black Muslims to claim a symbolic counter-citizenship that challenged black incorporation into the dominant discourse of Judeo-Christian Americanness and created alternative possibilities for freedom whereby Black people were not national minorities but global majorities. For more information of the Nation of Islam and Black Muslims, see, Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co., 2006), 11, 16, 114-115; Felicia M. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 2, 21-33; Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 97, 103, 118, 125-126.

[101] The Five Percent Nation was founded in Harlem in 1964 by Clarence 13X, a charismatic student minister who left the NOI after a schism with the leaders of NOI Temple #7. This group was primarily responsible for circulating, popularizing and reinterpreting NOI teachings among New York City youth. Unlike the NOI, the Five Percent Nation does not have formal leadership and includes a direct democratic system of decision-making. Five Percenters do not believe in an Abrahamic God; they argue that this "mystery god" who cannot be seen was created by the devil to trick and make slaves of humanity. Five Percenters believe in black Gnosis: in original time God created himself in the form of man. Therefore, if Black people are the original people of planet earth, then Black men are gods. The organization's name (Five Percenters) is derived from an NOI lesson with three teaching components. First, 85% of the earth's people are uncivilized, mentally deaf, dumb and blind slaves who do not know who the Living God is or their origin. Second, 10% of humans are rich slave-makers and bloodsuckers of the poor who use knowledge and power to wickedly deceive and exploit and teach that the Living God is a spook who cannot be seen by the physical eye. The final 5% are poor righteous teachers who do not believe in the teachings of the 10% and possess enough knowledge of self in order to enlighten others on the subjects of Allah, freedom, justice and equality. For more information, see, Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 258-259; Mattias Gardell, *In The Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and The Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 171-173; Yusuf Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths," in *Muslim Communities in North America*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1994), 109-117.

the Five Percent Nation was active in Hip Hop culture as early as the mid-1970s at block parties. This was especially true of events that had a heavy gang presence. He argued that, "a lot of Five Percenters used to hold me down [promise protection]. They would say, 'Yo Herc, don't worry about it.'"[102] Herc contended that Five Percenters were respected for their ability to keep gatherings peaceful and as such were often used as event bodyguards.[103] By the late 1980s, many rappers began using Five Percent knowledge though these artists were not always Five Percenters themselves. Those who utilized Five Percent doctrine believed that Rap's privileging of superior verbal ability offered practitioners a unique opportunity to teach youth self-knowledge that placed blackness at the center of civilization. Rapper Wise Intelligent (of the group Poor Righteous Teachers) argued that self-aware Black men possessed the duty of resurrecting the poor and teaching them that the "true and living God is the [...] supreme being Black man from Asia."[104] Many Five Percenter rappers also believed that their primary role was to draw youth closer to the teachings of Black Islam. Big Daddy Kane maintained,

> So many brothers and sisters are out here listening to [Rap]. And for those who won't listen to a Farrakhan speech, or won't play a Malcolm X tape, or don't go to any type of Islamic school whatsoever, and only have knowledge coming from the book teachings about a white god, they can learn through rappers like myself, KRS-One, Public Enemy and Rakim.[105]

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[102] Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 21; DJ Kool Herc as quoted in, Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahern, *Yes Yes Y'all: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip Hop's First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 26.
[103] Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 21; DJ Kool Herc as quoted in, Fricke and Ahern, *Yes Yes Y'all*, 26.
[104] Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 2, 42; Wise Intelligent as quoted in, Joseph D. Eure and James G. Spady, *Nation Conscious Rap* (New York: PC International Press, 1990), 60.
[105] Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 60, 137; Big Daddy Kane as quoted in, Eure and Spady, *Nation Conscious Rap*, 23.

Rakim echoed this sentiment when he stated, "I try to bring the youth into a level where they'll be interested to even begin to get into what the minister's [Farrakhan] speaking [...], and the curiosity to learn more about themselves."[106]

The influence of Black Islam spread throughout Hip Hop culture as a result of its intellectual interpretations of Black radicalism, Black internationalism, and the effects of racist discourses and the *duppy state* on black life. Sohail Daulatzai argues that rappers used NOI concepts to acheive four outcomes. First, in an era of hyper-nationalist rhetoric, the post-Civil Rights backlash, and the ongoing criminalization of blackness, rappers utilized NOI teachings to respond to Reagan-era anti-Black racism, repression and exclusion. Second, rappers hoped to expose the legacies of slavery in the contemporary moment particularly given the rise of the carceral state and the War on Drugs. Third, rappers utilized NOI teachings to convey Black pride and dignity. Finally, Rap mainstreamed in an era when the "Black criminal" and the Middle East were imagined as threats to national identity. Rappers responded to these anxieties by tapping into a deeper history of Black internationalism. In doing so, rappers linked African American struggles with those in Africa and the Muslim world and joined a long-standing tradition of post-World War II era Black radical practice that routed African American identity within and beyond the nation to broader communities of resistance.[107]

In addition to the Five Percent Nation, the Hip Hop generation also found a hero in Black Islam's foremost icon: Malcolm X. Daulatzai argues that many Hip Hop youth felt a kinship to Malcolm. Like many in the Hip Hop generation, Malcolm spent his early years incarcerated, and

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[106] Over the course of the next twenty years, a series of artists became publicly affiliated with the NOI including: Big Daddy Kane, Rakim, Public Enemy, Queen Latifah, Ice Cube, MC Shan, Nas, Wu-Tang Clan, Busta Rhymes, Stetsasonic, Poor Righteous Teachers, Brand Nubian, Gang Starr, Mobb Deep, Digable Planets, Leaders of the New School, and Black Thought. For more on the relationship between Hip Hop culture and Black Islam, see, Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 21, 37, 139, and Fricke and Ahern, *Yes Yes Y'all,* 26;

[107] Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 90-91, 110-114.

was continually imagined as a 'criminal' threat to the state (which served to justify his ongoing surveillance) until his death. Daulatzai maintains that many Hip Hop youth admired Malcolm's choice to convert to Islam to challenge American anti-black racism and link Black struggles to those in the African and Muslim world. For the Hip Hop generation, Malcolm represented an "authentic" and uncompromised blackness, and an activist who fought white supremacy, poverty, and black respectability politics.[108] Malcolm was so widely idolized among the Hip Hop generation that he was invoked in album lyrics, album cover art, and Hip Hop fashion as in the case of the "X" hat which was initially designed by the Brooklyn, New York-based Forty Acres and a Mule apparel firm to promote Spike Lee's 1992 film *Malcolm X*.[109] This appreciation for Malcolm was perhaps most evident on Boogie Down Productions' album cover for *By All Means Necessary* – an album title that gestured to and modified Malcolm's phrase "by any means necessary."[110] The album's cover art referenced an iconic photo of Malcolm X peering through his window while holding an M1 carbine rifle album. On the cover, KRS-One, the lead rapper of Boogie Down Productions, was depicted as Malcolm X was – this time holding an automatic handgun.[111]

The rise of socially conscious Rap – particularly content that was inspired by the Five Percent Nation – must also be credited to Farrakhan who recognized the significant role that youth should play in the future of the NOI. Felicia M. Miyakawa argues that prior to the Million Man March,

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[108] Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, 98.

[109] William Kissel, "The X Factor: Caps with Malcolm X's initial are turning up everywhere. Are they political statements or just another way to look cool?" *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1992, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-05-22-vw-159-story.html (accessed July 14, 2019). A short list of rappers who have invoked Malcolm X include: Boogie Down Productions, Nas, Tupac Shakur, Lakim Shabazz, DA Smart, Gangstarr, and Public Enemy. A number of rappers/Rap groups also adopted the "X" as part of their artist names, as in the case of Sadat X, Mia X, and X-Clan.

[110] The phrase "by any means necessary" entered popular civil rights culture following Malcolm X's June 28, 1964 speech at the Organization of Afro-American Unity's founding rally. For more information on this speech, see, El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X), "Malcolm X's Speech at the Founding Rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity," New York, June 28, 1964, BlackPast.org, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/speeches-african-american-history/1964-malcolm-x-s-speech-founding-rally-organization-afro-american-unity/ (accessed July 14, 2019).

[111] Boogie Down Productions, *By All Means Necessary* (album cover art), (Jive/RCA Records, 1097-1-J, 1988).

Farrakhan demonstrated his commitment to the Hip Hop generation by appointing rapper Prince Akeem to the NOI's position of Minister of Youth. Farrakhan believed that rappers were uniquely positioned as missionaries in that they retained knowledge of self and the verbal skill needed to communicate with the world's remaining 85 percent. Farrakhan also acknowledged the limitations of his influence on the youth – he claimed, "one rap song is worth more than a thousand of my speeches."[112]

Despite Black Islam's popularity among rappers, Farrakhan and the NOI were often imagined in public discourse as controversial and problematic figures. Prior to the Million Man March, the Nation of Islam's legacy had been riddled with negativity – namely concerns over their foundational doctrine, the leadership of Elijah Mohammed, the suspicion that they had been responsible for firebombing Malcolm X's home, and the conviction of Talmadge X Hayer (an NOI member) for Malcolm X's assassination.[113] Farrakhan also had his own controversial history that included separatist politics, and making public statements that Jews were "bloodsuckers" and Judaism was a "gutter religion."[114] By the l990s, the NOI began drawing closer to traditional Civil Rights organizations and the Congressional Black Caucus to re-build their image and re-shape their legacy.[115] Part of this transformation included Farrakhan's decision to recruit Reverend Benjamin Chavis as the Million Man March's National Director. Farrakhan also chose to quiet his overt defiance of white authority, and modulate his anti-Semitic rhetoric.[116] Journalist Ta-Nehesi Coates

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[112] Louis Farrakhan as quoted in, Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 22.
[113] Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour*, 114-115.
[114] Manning Marable and Russell Rickford, *Beyond Boundaries: The Manning Marable Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 120.
[115] Edward J. Boyer, "'Million Man March' Draws Support and Concerns: Rally: Many Back the Focus on Black Males, but Others Remain Wary," *Los Angeles Times*, September 16 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-09-16/local/me-46609_1_black-male (accessed September 15 2015); Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 400-401; Bakari Kitwana, "Mass Appeal: Farrakhan's Ability to Walk the Thin Line Between Love and Hate has Brought Him Center Stage," *The Source*, January 1996, 60.
[116] Chavis decided to join Farrakhan as a member of the March's organizing committee due to his shared dislike of the continuous stereotypical and negative images of 'Black-on-Black' violence in the media, and the self-destructive

argued that Farrakhan made these decisions to establish his legitimacy, broaden his membership, and appeal to the white mainstream and growing black middle class.[117] Jeff Chang argues that despite Farrakhan's decision to transform the NOI's legacy and his leadership in order to draw more sympathizers, many within the ranks of the Black left continued to imagine his leadership as a serious threat to the advancement of Black liberation.[118]

By the mid-1990s, Farrakhan and Chavis' decision to recruit greater numbers of the Hip Hop generation to the NOI's fold demonstrated an attempt to reconcile the gap between disparate generations of Black Americans. Across the latter twentieth century, the NOI often recruited its members among the black working and workless poor in urban spaces, or what Coates called "Afro-America's untouchables": inner city pimps, prostitutes, and drug pushers. Years later, Coates recalled that by the mid-1990s, NOI membership had significantly diversified to include:

> Balding businessmen still dapper in ties and jackets from the 9-to-5 world; homeboys from West Baltimore in Champion hoodies and baggy Guess jeans; and college kids like me, nationalist and otherwise, who'd come for a shot of confidence from the one man who could make us feel like everything was gonna be all right.[119]

Chang argues that Farrakhan became increasingly interested in recruiting Black male youth. He did so by holding gang summits, visiting prisons, convening "Stop the Killing" events, having "men-only" meetings, and establishing the NOI's ministries in the places that other Black

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drug activity that had taken shape in many black communities across the country. Like Farrakhan, Chavis was no stranger to controversy. Chavis, a Baptist minister from North Carolina, had been ousted from the NAACP in 1994 for using $332,400 of the organization's funds without the board's approval to settle a former employee's sexual harassment suit in an out-of-court settlement. For more information on Chavis' history and his recruitment to the Million Man March, see, Boyer, "'Million Man March' Draws Support and Concerns"; Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 400-401; Kitwana, "Mass Appeal"; Kristen Clarke, "Dr. Ben Chavis Speaks on the Million Man March on Washington, '95 Style," *The Source*, October 1995, 32.

[117] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Last Angry Man: What Happens when the Nation of Islam Turns into a Black Version of the Promise Keepers?" *Washington Monthly*, January/February 2001, http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/0101.coates.html (accessed October 28 2015).

[118] Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 224.

[119] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Angry Man: What Happens When The Nation of Islam Turns Into A Black Version of the Promise Keepers," *The Washington Monthly*, January/February 2001: 40.

organizing groups were hesitant to visit: gang territory, crack houses and drug blocks.[120] This decision to recruit among Black, poor, urban, male youth would prove particularly useful as Farrakhan built a bridge between the NOI and the Hip Hop generation.

Farrakhan's recruitment efforts along with his outlaw status placed him in the favour of a Hip Hop generation who already felt deeply alienated from the Civil Rights generation and enraged by their respectability politics. Chang argues that the Hip Hop generation felt profoundly disconnected from Civil Rights activism and its leaders because they believed that earlier activists lacked the capacity, desire and ingenuity to respond to contemporary social justice and black working class concerns such as poverty, unemployment, the proliferation of drugs and crime, a crumbling school system, police surveillance and incarceration.[121] Many members of the Hip Hop generation also appreciated his politics of resilience, Black pride, and his resistance of white supremacy. Def Jam executive Bill Stephney argued that Farrakhan was, "the only Black leader who said, 'you Black man can pick yourself up. You can have strong families. You can build your own businesses.'"[122] Deejay Afrika Bambaataa maintained that Farrakhan's teachings negated the superiority of whiteness, and this deeply resonated with disenfranchised Hip Hop youth. He argued that, "they [the NOI] held the teachings of 'you're not a nigga. You're not coloured. Wake up Black men and Black woman and love yourself. Respect your own. Turn back to Africa.' That started sticking with a lot of the brothers and sisters."[123] Mark Anthony Neal contends that Hip Hop youth found Farrakhan alluring because he was not beholden to liberals or conservatives, he spoke brazenly about structural racism, and he challenged any political use of colourblindness to claim that Blacks

[120] Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 124, 224-225; Kitwana, "Mass Appeal."
[121] Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 269.
[122] Bill Stephney as quoted in, Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 224-225; Kitwana, "Mass Appeal."
[123] Afrika Bambaataa as quoted in, Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 100.

were no longer oppressed.[124] By the fall of 1995, Million Man March organizers were keenly aware of the Hip Hop generation's attraction to Farrakhan and they tapped into this cohort to recruit greater numbers to the March. Sam Fulwood of the *LA Times'* reported that organizers targeted primarily working class Black men, many of whom were in their late teens and early 20s and represented segments of the Black community that other political organizations had not captured.[125]

Prior to the March, the NOI's recruitment efforts demonstrated what appeared to be a genuine attempt to give the Hip Hop generation and rappers a platform to articulate Rap's 'Terrordome' and participate in the Black freedom struggle from which many Black urban youth felt estranged. For example, Chavis told journalist Kristen Clarke of *The Source* that the Hip Hop generation was ready to play a leadership role in the Black liberation movement. He argued,

> I think the Hip Hop generation has been prepared prior to the call for the March. I think this is what the Hip Hop generation has been waiting for. Of the one million Black men, I am almost positive that fifty percent of them are going to be young Black men. This will be their first demonstration. This will be their first organized public resistance to American racism.[126]

When asked what role he believed rappers could play in the March, Chavis referenced Rap's capacity to convey liberatory messaging and educate audiences about the importance of voting. He contended,

> I think Hip Hop music is a very effective medium, not only to generate enthusiasm about the march, but the content of the march has some very detailed language. So the question is how can you get some of that detailed language across to people? […] Hip Hop music, Hip Hop language, the message of Hip Hop is transformational, and the Million Man March is transformational. So the convergence of these two will be a manifestation of what rappers have been rapping about for several years. […] We

[124] Mark Anthony Neal, *What The Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Popular Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 141; Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 223-224.
[125] Sam Fullwood III, "Blacks Not in Lock Step as Washington March Nears: Race: Several Aspects of 'Million Man' Effort are Controversial. Opinions Range from Support for the Demonstration's Ideals to Denunciation of its Leaders," *Los Angeles Times*, October 7, 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-07/news/mn-54281_1_million-man-march (accessed September 15 2015).
[126] Ben Chavis as quoted in, Clarke, "Dr. Ben Chavis Speaks," 32.

> need the Hip Hop artists to really help us [by] using the Hip Hop art form to educate people about the importance of voting, reminding people of the sacrifice and the blood that was shed to give us the right to vote.[127]

Chavis told Clarke that Rap music could function as a promotional platform to convey the shared political intentions of rappers and March organizers. Chavis maintained that Rap could galvanize interest in voting, mobilize the Black vote, and call for a general strike against nationwide anti-black racism.[128]

While March organizers attempted to reconcile the gap between the Civil Rights and Hip Hop generations, they simultaneously mobilized respectability politics to recruit members and reinforce their agenda. These discourses materialized as the promotion of heterosexual masculinity, patriarchy, the nuclear family, institutionalized religion, and self-determination. First, Farrakhan highlighted the ambiguous themes of atonement and reconciliation to revitalize Black male spirituality. Organizers insisted that the Million Man March was intended for Black men only because they needed to atone for their mistreatment of each other and Black women, as well as their abandonment of positive family values and their failure to put God first. Farrakhan maintained that if March organizers could help strengthen Black men and their communities, they could send a powerful message to the Republican-controlled Congress that the economic, political and social needs of African Americans did not deserve their hostility.[129] Organizers claimed that if women were interested in participating, they should support the March from their homes. They justified this request by suggesting that the strength of 'the black community' had always come from women

[127] Ben Chavis as quoted in, Clarke, "Dr. Ben Chavis Speaks," 32.
[128] Clarke, "Dr. Ben Chavis Speaks," 32.
[129] Religion News Service, "'Million Man' Plan Divides Churches: Some African Americans View March as Effort to Legitimize Farrakhan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 7 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-07/local/me-54197_1_million-man-march (accessed September 15 2015).

staying in the home and supporting their men.[130] Second, organizers intended to register voters – many for the first time. They hoped that voting registration would mobilize black economic power and refocus the 'black community's' attention on strengthening heteronormative families. Though Farrakhan encouraged Black male attendees to vote, he also argued that they needed to take responsibility for their lives and their communities rather than look to the Federal government to solve their problems.[131]

The patriarchal, heteronormative and spiritual language of the Million Man March organizing committee made clear that Black men and youth were at the center of freedom struggle demands. Committee members agreed that 'the black community' would be better able to influence American institutions and secure racial equality if they could first hold Black men accountable and demonstrate a massive unified force. Organizers hoped that the March would convince Black men to engage in self-reflexivity and recognize their wrongdoing, as well as make amends and correct their conduct. Chi Modu of *The Source* Magazine argued that the March was intended to help Black men make a commitment to "be better persons, live fuller and more meaningful lives, build strong, loving and egalitarian families and struggle to make [their] community, society and world a better place in which to live."[132] Modu's interpretation of the March reflected the deeply patriarchal language of the March which reinforced the heteronormative belief that Black men were at the center of corrective community measures.[133]

Aside from members of the Hip Hop generation, the March also included a complicated set of supporters and participants that spanned a vast, and in some cases controversial, political,

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[130] Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 401; Byron P. White, "Million Man March Tries To Stay On Course," *The Chicago Tribune*, October 14 1996, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1996-10-14/news/9610140138_1_million-man-march-islam-leader-louis-farrakhan-bus (accessed September 15 2015).
[131] Boyer, "'Million Man March' Draws Support and Concerns."
[132] Chi Modu, "One Million Deep," *The Source*, January 1996, 54.
[133] Modu, "One Million Deep," 54.

religious and activist spectrum. Supporters included African American Democratic Mayor Marion Barry of the District of Columbia (and first chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) who served six months in federal prison for crack cocaine drug charges in 1990; African American Democratic Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore who favoured drug decriminalization and initiated housing, education, public health and economic development programs in his city; and members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which played a large role in the major activities of the Civil Rights Movement and had a complicated relationship with the NOI dating back to the 1950s. Amid scathing critiques over the March's exclusion of women and Farrakhan's history of anti-Semitic sentiments, organizers also drew in participants from unexpected quarters such as the National Council of Negro Women (a non-profit organization committed to advancing the opportunities and quality of life for African American women); the National Political Congress of Black Women (a non-profit organization dedicated to the educational, political, economic and cultural development of African American women and their families that also partook in the Congressional Hearings on Gangsta Rap); and Philadelphia's Jewish-American Democrat Mayor Edward G. Rendell who was known for his efforts to improve services for under-served Philadelphia neighbourhoods despite a fiscal downturn.[134]

Despite support from a wide spectrum of expected and unanticipated personalities and organizations, the March was continually critiqued by various religious, political and public intellectuals for Farrakhan's bigotry, sexism and anti-Semitism. Both the Progressive National Baptist group and Imam Warith Deen Mohammed's (former leader of the Nation of Islam) ministry of the American Society of Muslims – the largest Black American Muslim group in the nation –

[134] Fullwood III, "Blacks Not in Lock Step as Washington March Nears."

interpreted the March as a publicity stunt to bid for social and political legitimization.[135] Former chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Democratic Member of the U.S House of Representatives from Georgia's 5th district John Lewis contended, "I don't want to be associated with or identified with anything that tends to demonstrate signs of racism, bigotry or anti-Semitism."[136] General Colin Powell, who was rumored to be one of the possible Republican candidates in the 1996 presidential election, was tempted to join the Million Man March though he ultimately decided against it. Like the NAACP, the Urban League and the National Baptist Convention, Powell preferred to distance himself from Farrakhan for his racist and anti-Semitic expressions.[137] Public intellectual Randall Kennedy argued that the March increased the potential of racial polarization by hardening white attitudes on the central concerns of the March. Kennedy also claimed that the March's focus on self-reflexivity discouraged white naysayers from sharing the burden of dealing with the national conversation on race.[138] Finally, David Bositis, senior policy analyst at the black-oriented Washington think tank Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, said that in the days leading up to the March, many African Americans feared that Republicans were already hostile to the black agenda and the event only exacerbated these concerns.[139]

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[135] Religion News Service, "'Million Man' Plan Divides Churches"; Jerry Thomas, "Jewish Group Wants Links To Blacks, Not Farrakhan," *The Chicago Tribune*, November 4 1995, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-11-04/news/9511040088_1_islam-leader-louis-farrakhan-million-man-march-fight-bigotry (accessed on September 15 2015).
[136] John Lewis as quoted in, Associated Press, "Farrakhan Causes New Controversy as March Approaches," *CNN*, October 14 1995, http://www.cnn.com/US/9510/megamarch/10-14/march/index.html (accessed December 18, 2016).
[137] Elizabeth Shogren, "Million Man March: Powell Praises Positive Parts of Gathering: March: General Wishes Someone Else Had Thought of the Event. He Respects Farrakhan's Success, but Deplores What he Calls His Racism, Anti-Semitism," *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1995 http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-17/news/mn-57976_1_million-man-march (accessed September 15 2015).
[138] Sam Fullwood III, "A Million Reasons for Hopes and Fears: Assembly: For Better or Worse, the Washington March is Expected to Heighten Feelings of Racial Differences," *Los Angeles Times*, October 16 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-16/news/mn-57612_1_million-man-march (accessed on September 15 2015).
[139] Fullwood III, "A Million Reasons for Hopes and Fears."

Among the March's most vocal critics were Black female activists and their allies who objected to its retrograde gender politics and insistence that heterosexual Black men were at the center of black leadership. These critics were bothered by the March's call for men (only) to take their supposedly rightful place as community leaders and resume responsibilities that they had previously abdicated. They were also troubled by the insistence that women should stay home and contribute through gender-specific acts.[140] *Ms. Magazine* editor Marcia A. Gillespie argued that the organizing members were "stepping up to a patriarchal vision that automatically says Black men are the leaders, and that women's place and role is with the children, frying the chicken, providing medical assistance when needed and writing a poem."[141] Speaking on behalf of African American Agenda 2000, a group that formed in opposition to the March, activist Angela Davis argued, "no march, movement or agenda that defines manhood in the narrowest terms and seeks to make women lesser partners in this quest for equality can be considered a positive step. […] There are ways of understanding Black masculinity that do not rely on subjugating women."[142] Founder of the National Coalition of One Hundred Black Women, Jewell Jackson McCabe asked, "How dare anyone ask us to show unity by silence? What price for our own dignity, and what price for our own community's dignity?"[143] bell hooks, an academic noted for her feminism and social activism, was perhaps the harshest in her condemnation of the March. She called the event a "celebration of fascist patriarchy."[144] Writing for the *Chicago Tribune* days before the March, academic Michael Eric Dyson also chimed in,

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[140] Beth J. Harpaz, "Angela Davis Denounces Farrakhan March for Excluding Women," *Associated Press Wire Report*, October 14 1995, http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1995/Angela-Davis-Denounces-Farrakhan-March-For-Excluding-Women/id-ef9dc06106a4c2d9aecdd37743745b2f (accessed December 18, 2016); Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 401; Associated Press, "Farrakhan Causes New Controversy as March Approaches."
[141] Marcia A Gillespie as quoted in, Harpaz, "Angela Davis Denounces Farrakhan March for Excluding Women."
[142] Angela Davis as quoted in, Harpaz, "Angela Davis Denounces Farrakhan March for Denounces Women."
[143] Jewell Jackson McCabe as quoted in, Associated Press, "Farrakhan Causes New Controversy as March Approaches."
[144] bell hooks as quoted in, Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 401.

> I understand why many Black women, gays and lesbians are troubled by some of the language used to justify this march, especially talk of 'saving our families.' To many Black women, such concerns sound like little more than warmed over patriarchal ambitions to reassert authority by reclaiming our 'rightful' place as head of the family.[145]

Prior to the March, the National Black and Gay and Lesbian Leadership also voted not to endorse the March. They opposed the March's patriarchal tone and were offended by a set of homophobic comments made by its organizers, and the decision not to include a Black gay speaker and an HIV-positive spokesperson.[146]

Despite ongoing criticisms and boycotts, the March took place on October 16, 1995 and audiences listened as Farrakhan delivered a speech that circulated respectability discourses alongside symbolic gestures to Civil Rights victories. In his "Day of Atonement" speech, Farrakhan spoke in excess of two hours as helicopters circled above the event stage and participants threw their fists in the air. He called for Black-on-Black peace, self-responsibility and discipline.[147] Farrakhan insisted, "we cannot continue the destruction of our lives and the destruction of our communities," as he alluded to 'Black-on-Black' violence, drug abuse and domestic violence in 'inner city' neighbourhoods.[148] Farrakhan insisted that this March was a call to its participants to go home, join black organizations, unite against racism and cleanse black communities of crime, drugs and violence.[149] In earlier statements, Farrakhan rooted these social ills in moments of state

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[145] Michael Eric Dyson, "Embracing A Public Ritual Of Accountability," *The Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1995, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-10-15/news/9510150070_1_million-man-march-minister-louis-farrakhan-black-women (accessed on September 15 2015).
[146] Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 401-402.
[147] C-SPAN, "Million Man March," C-SPAN Video Library, October 16, 1995, https://www.c-span.org/video/?67630-1/million-man-march (accessed July 14, 2019).
[148] Adario Strange, "One In A Million: One Man's Journey Through Truth, Self-Determination and the Future," *The Source*, January 1996, 64, 95.
[149] Sam Fullwood III and Marc Lacey, "Million Man March: Black Men, in Show of Unity, Join in 400,000-Strong March: Rally: Speakers, Participants Make Clear They Must Rely on Themselves. 'We Cannot Continue the Destruction of our Lives and Communities,' says Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-17/news/mn-57952_1_black-men-million-man-march-warmth-and-community (accessed on September 15 2015).

violence, the victimization of black communities, and personal responsibility. However, on the day of the March, he attributed these 'social ills' to issues of self-discipline and self-determination. By delivering his oration from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where King delivered his "I Have A Dream" speech thirty-two years earlier, Farrakhan re-created a symbolic moment of change and continuity that had implications for both black communities and America at large. In an age where images of the Civil Rights era and its icons had been commoditized, especially among Hip Hop youth, Farrakhan used this symbolism to appeal to a generation that had not experienced the same sort of transformative change.[150]

And yet, despite the ongoing claim that the March's core audience was Black male youth, the Hip Hop generation – its practitioners in particular – played a fairly marginal role in the day's event. While the Hip Hop generation made up a sizeable portion of the March attendees, practitioners did not figure as prominently in proceedings. Case in point: though a number of rappers attended the Million Man March – including Chuck D (of Public Enemy), Fresh Prince, Common and Ice Cube – Hip Hop practitioners were absent from the live performances (just as they had been during the Grammys). The reason for this decision is unknown. Instead, organizers included virtually every other genre of black popular music. And so, for all of the NOI's recruitment efforts among the Hip Hop generation, those on the stage at the Million Man March included members of 'the black community' that reinforced Black respectability discourses. Given that the March was broadcast live to the nation, it is reasonable to assume that Farrakhan did not want the March to be associated with Rap which was imagined in public discourse as 'unruly.'

[150] James P. Pinkerton, "The Ultimate Affirmation of Conservatism: The Million Man March Signals the Final Dismantling of the Great Society," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-19/local/me-58589_1_million-man-march (accessed December 18 2016).

This detail bears even greater consideration given that Farrakhan was invested in his self-preservation and had been working tirelessly to produce a newly sanitized image.[151]

Despite organizers' efforts to draw the Hip Hop generation into the NOI fold, the only moment that Rap was featured during the Million Man March was in the form of the "Where Ya At?" music video that played after the televised event as attendees left. "Where Ya At," which peaked at 61 on the *Billboard* Chart, was released on November 7th, 1995 – less than a month following the Million Man March. The recording was the leading single on the *One Million Strong: The Album,* which peaked at 36 on *Billboard*'s Top R&B/Hip Hop Albums chart.[152] The album was a compilation of artists, regional sounds and production techniques from the American east coast (New Jersey, New York), midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio), west coast (Arizona, California) and Jamaica. Content wise, "Where Ya At" was intended to commemorate the Million Man March as well as convey NOI rhetoric in a Rap voice. Album reviewer Matt Jost contended that the record reflected a plurality of opinions and ideologies that represented in practice, the non-partisan dimension of the Million Man March.[153] Lauded for its inclusion of prominent mainstream talent alongside lesser known artists, *One Million Strong* included the work of 42 Rap and Reggae artists/groups that included 2Pac, 7th Ambassador, Black Wine, Bogus, B.O.N.E Thugs-N-Harmony, Brooklyn Zu, Buju Banton, C-No Gee, Channel Live, Chuck D, Crazy Tee, DA Smart, Dr. Dre, Dramacydal, E. Rule, Ice Cube, Ice T, Insane, KAM, Kaotic Sypher, Killah Priest, Lord Jamar, Melquan, Merchant, Mobb Deep, Notorious B.I.G, P.I Crazee, Prince Ital Joe, RZA, Shorty, Smooth B, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Step X Step, Stretch, Sunz of Man, The Alkaholiks, Tone Def

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[151] C-SPAN, "Million Man March."
[152] *One Million Strong: The Album* was produced by S.O.L.A.R. Records (Sound of Los Angeles Records), a black-owned label founded by Dick Griffey and *Soul Train* creator Don Cornelius (who had testified during the Congressional hearing in 1994), as well as the VP of Death Row Records John Atterberry, industry expert Jimmy "JT" Thomas, and NOI member Jalal Farrakhan.
[153] *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).

Clicc, Top Authority, True, Val Young and X-Niggaz.[154] Every performer on the album was male. And yet, despite the album's obvious parallels to the March, and the NOI's declaration that the recording was the *official* anthem of the Million Man March, "Where Ya At" only played as attendees left the national mall on a screen to the side of the main stage.[155]

The Million Man March anthem included an accompanying music video that showcased what rappers imagined as the state's hostile reaction to news of a public demonstration that continued on in the legacy of the Black liberation movement. The video began in a dark and barren office where an unidentified white man in a business suit leaned over an answering machine. The audience listened as a phone message played aloud captured the voice of rapper Ice Cube who called from post-Apartheid Johannesburg, South Africa. He rapped, "the world has never seen a million Black men in one place, but on October 16, in Washington, D.C., a million Black men will gather."[156] As the white man listened to this news, the camera panned between images of his clenched fists slamming against a desk, his head nodding left to right in disgust, and a sticker of the Central Intelligence Agency's seal stuck on his desk.[157] All of the featured rappers, less two, performed in spaces that were confined and hidden from the prying eyes of the public. The rappers periodically threw their fists in the air – which recalled Black Power iconography – and articulated Five Percenter knowledge and language in their lyricism.[158] Sonically, the record highlighted

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[154] *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[155] Ice T, Ice Cube, KAM, Mobb Deep, DA Smart, Insane, Shorty, Smooth B, Chuck D, RZA, and Killah Priest, "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995); Joel Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn Presents: Top R&B/Hip Hop Singles, 1942-2004* (Menomonee Falls, Wis: Record Research Inc., 2004), 441.
[156] Ice Cube as quoted in, Music video for "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[157] Music video for "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[158] Ice T rapped from an underground studio surrounded by shark tanks, Chuck D and DA Smart rapped in an all-white room, and the remaining artists rapped in a dark underground space with a series of pillars from the floor to ceiling. The only two rappers that were not featured in contained spaces were RZA (of the Wu-Tang Clan) and Killah Priest (a Wu-Tang affiliate) who rapped outside of a dilapidated storefront, likely in an 'inner city'

historical continuity between Black freedom struggles by employing a sample lyric from rapper Special Ed's 1990 single "The Mission": "this is a mission, not a small time thing."[159] This sample was visually complemented by archival footage from the 1963 March on Washington. The footage was likely intended to do three things. First, the material served as a reminder that the Million Man March was part of a larger Black freedom struggle. Second, the images reflected the commonalities between the 1963 and 1995 marches – namely, the large crowd on the Washington Mall, Black men holding placards in protest, and Civil Rights activists speaking from a podium to clapping attendees. Third, it was possible that these images were also meant to visually represent what Farrakhan was already doing politically: reframing the NOI's legacy and its leadership by using the memory of the Civil Rights Movement.[160]

The "Where Ya At?" recording became a screen on which rappers rationalized their support for the March and detailed the nature of their contemporary concerns over race, power and the contemporary fight for Black liberation. Ice T initiated the discussion by describing the three strikes law that disproportionately targeted Black men and increased the severity of prison sentences. He invited young Black men to reject a life of crime in light of the consequences. He rapped,

> Brothers gonna have to put themself in check / Three strikes you in the penzo, checked to your neck / Your woman cries, your baby grows up alone / Talkin' through a three inch glass on a two way phone / You tell me brothers got no options today / You best listen to the Ice closely fool, crime don't pay / Gas and dope bullets and coke ain't the way / You need to march with the Nation on Atonement Day.[161]

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neighbourhood. For more information, see, Music video for "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995); The Rza, *The Tao of Wu* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009.

[159] Special Ed, "The Mission," 1990, *Legal* (Profile Records, PRO-1297, 1990).

[160] Music video for "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).

[161] Ice T as quoted in, "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).

"Where Ya At?" rappers also critiqued integration and reminded listeners of the state's failed promises to African Americans in the afterlives of slavery. Rapper DA Smart alluded to the kidnapping of black bodies and the erasure of continental African culture vis-a-vis the transatlantic slave trade: "Somebody stole me / you took me from Kunta to Toby / and mold me in a way that you freed me but still hold me."[162] He claimed that Black men were marching in 1995 because they realized that they had been duped and denied the promises following emancipation. Alluding to the famous phrase first articulated during Reconstruction and later by Malcolm X, DA Smart asked, "whatever happened to that forty acres and that animal [mule]? Now you tryin' to use integration just to fool us. Like Malcolm said, we been hoodwinked and bamboozled."[163]

"Where Ya At" was Rap's thesis on what black solidarity politics looked like in the era of the Million Man March if African Americans were to combat the *duppy state*. In alluding to the Ku Klux Klan's vigilante terrorism, rapper KAM recasted the American Dream as an "AmeriKKKan nightmare."[164] He rapped, "Damn, that's how you know the world about to end / Rain, hail, snow, earthquakes, and a million Black men / Upon the God indivisible / With liberty and justice for all cause y'all done made us miserable."[165] Rappers used "Where Ya At" to present an apocalyptic declaration that if a million united Black men arrived on the grounds of the national mall, it meant that the world was about to end. KAM argued that African Americans needed to unify across religious practices (namely Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) to correct what he called

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[162] DA Smart as quoted in, "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995); Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976); Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (TV miniseries). Directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, John Erman, David Greene and Gilbert Moses. New York City: ABC, 1977. This lyric was a direct reference to the main character in Alex Haley's popular publication which inspired a television mini-series.
[163] DA Smart as quoted in, "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[164] KAM as quoted in, "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[165] "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).

"overdue [sic] bidness [business]."[166] At the song's close, in an ongoing call-and-response manner, rappers asked, "So where you at y'all?" To which, an echo of figurative Black male listeners responded: "Right here, hangin' with my brothers and we showin' no fear."[167] Here, rappers used the 'Terrordome' to declare that they were not terrified, and they had come to the mall to terrify.

Despite rappers' desire to participate in the Million Man March, the album liner notes for *One Million Strong* suggested that the NOI was hesitant to demonstrate its public support of Rap music. The liner notes contained a disclosure that read: "Some of the lyrical content within this album does not reflect the views of the Hon. Louis Farrakhan and/or the Nation of Islam. This album contains songs which were freely donated to strengthen our economic indolence as a [black] people."[168] While it was not clear what album producers meant by economic indolence, the phrase is curious (given the NOIs racial uplift philosophy), contradictory and deeply problematic. While it was not explicitly clear which of the lyrical contributions the NOI endorsed, the liner notes outlined that proceeds for the album were to be used to fund the Million Man March and associated Nation of Islam projects.[169] Album reviewer Matt Jost argued that this disclosure suggested that the album was not an explicitly NOI project, nor were all production team members card-carrying members of the NOI. This liner note disclosure did however indicate that a significant number of rappers felt connected to Farrakhan's NOI and wanted to be a part of the March's activist energy. Jost argues that despite the album's star power, its belated release, unattractive cover artwork and production under an obscure label, the album was likely conceived by a group other than political

[166] KAM as quoted in, "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[167] KAM as quoted in, "Where Ya At?," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[168] Liner Notes, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[169] Liner Notes, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).

propaganda professionals.[170]Artists and March organizers alike knew that Rap was central to the spread of Black Islam, just as Reggae had been to the expansion of Rastafarianism.[171]

And yet despite the album disclosure in the liner notes, *One Million Strong* contained a fair amount of NOI approved ideology and principles inspired by Black leadership statements which allowed rappers to make a scathing indictment of the *duppy state*. *One Million Strong* could be easily reduced to Gangsta Rap given that some lyrical content focused on describing the killing of police, promoting misogyny and materialism, and suggesting that accumulating wealth by illegal means such as drug dealing and pimping women was an ideal economic strategy. In conjunction with this content, rappers also presented a number of cautionary tales about 'Black-on-Black' violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and the effects of poverty on mental health. They also questioned the nature of the American Dream given the destructive nature of police brutality, the corrupt justice system, and the inequitable nature of the American welfare system. Rappers reasoned that many of these issues stemmed from enslavement, the capitalistic exploitation of Black people, white supremacy and American imperialism. They used their recordings to endorse solutions such as economic freedom, black entrepreneurialism and reparations. They also affirmed the power of the knowledge of the Black self, lauding Black ancestry and naming Black people as gods.[172]

Throughout *One Million Strong*, rappers used Rap's 'Terrordome' to unmask the *duppy state*'s ability to disturb, terrorize and disrupt the daily life and mental health of Black people in the United States. One such example was the record "Tight Situation" featuring rappers Kaotic

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[170] Matt Jost, "*One Million Strong* Review of Album: Various Artists," *RapReviews "Back to the Lab" Series,* Originally Posted on July 31 2007, http://www.rapreviews.com/archive/BTTL_onemillionstrong.html (accessed on October 1 2015).
[171] Doris Witt, *Black Hunger: Food and the Politics of US Identity*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102.
[172] *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).

Sypher, Bogus, True and P.l. Crazee. The foursome began with a dark retelling of their protagonist's suicidal thoughts:

> I got nowhere to turn and run and hide / Often contemplate suicide / […] Steady drinkin' the liquor […] / and it seem my time on Earth is gettin' short / Two puffs left on my last Newport [cigarettes] / Lock the glock and the 9 [gun] / lock one in the chamber / Danger, danger, pull the purse off a stranger.[173]

While the quartet appeared to be depicting the 'indolence' that was described in the *One Million Strong* liner notes, their lyrics revealed the underbelly of urban living and how Black geographies in these spaces were shaped by ongoing anxiety, trauma, PTSD and depression. The lyrics depicted a protagonist who was aware of his growing hopelessness following an admission that he constantly heard noises and voices in his head. The protagonist admitted that he felt forsaken by a God who continued to ignore his requests. His paranoia was so excessive that he felt compelled to carry a gun. The four rappers attributed these sentiments to the ongoing bleakness of urban spaces in the form of limited opportunities, joblessness, depleted bank accounts and thievery presenting itself as the only illusive option.[174]

The prevalent thesis of the Million Man March's soundtrack was that the *duppy state* had produced an urban black population that shared perpetual sentiments of panic, paranoia, betrayal and endangerment. This was especially evident in the recording "Tight Situation" where Kaotic Sypher described the city as afflicted by a deep "pneumonia" in which the symptoms included a constant state of panic, paranoia, and endangerment that necessitated a survival of the fittest mentality. Sypher described urban dwellers as repeatedly combatting unemployment, a poor welfare system, the infiltration of the drug economy and death that comes as a result of illegal

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[173] Kaotic Sypher featuring Bogus, True and P.I. Crazee, "Tight Situation," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[174] Kaotic Sypher featuring Bogus, True and P.I. Crazee, "Tight Situation," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).

capital, drug abuse and gang violence. In "Tight Situation," rappers Kaotic Sypher, Bogus, True and P.l. Crazee imagined urban living as both a "concrete hell" where residents lived in homes with bars on the windows and doors, and a modern-day plantation where working and workless poor Black residents were chained in projects like the enslaved and metaphorically lynched by their depressing surroundings. They also articulated a deep sense of betrayal from an "Uncle Sam" who made false promises to African Americans following emancipation. In the recording's closing statement, Sypher argued that America continued to segregate and restrain blacks while claiming to have long freed them. He concluded the recording with a call to arms: "Y'all brothers better realize that in the [19]95, it's either homicide or genocide. If y'all can't find nothin' to live for, find somethin' to die for nigga."[175]

Conclusion

The Congressional Hearing on Gangsta Rap and the Million Man March maintained a unique hold on the African American imagination, particularly as Black people struggled to define what 'blackness' and 'community' meant at the end of the twentieth century. For the Hip Hop generation – particularly urban working class youth – the 1990s reflected a moment where young artists used their public platform to articulate ongoing feelings of isolation and disappointment in the failings of the Civil Rights era. This was perhaps best captured in a statement made by Rap producer No I.D following the March. He claimed, "The [Million Man] March will be more effective than the 1963 March on Washington, […] because instead of focusing on civil rights activists, it's taking the regular brother from the street and making him see things that he may not have seen."[176] The

[175] Kaotic Sypher featuring Bogus, True and P.I. Crazee, "Tight Situation," 1995, *One Million Strong: The Album* (Mergela Records/Solar, 72267-2, 1995).
[176] David Kelly, "It Takes a Nation of Millions: Minister Louis Farrakhan to Lead A Million Man March on Washington," *The Source*, October 1995, 32.

public contest over Rap music during the 1990s exposed genuine generational conflict and questions about solidarity politics, traditionalism, conformity, understanding and compassion. On the one hand, anti-Rap critics characterized Rap as "indigestible," "offensive," and "slouching towards Gomorrah."[177] And yet, in other moments, there were a number of Black constituents who suggested that rappers needed their deep empathy, understanding, and even protection because rappers were articulating experiences of terror, trauma, frustration and hopelessness that deserved a platform.[178]

Within the unpredictable landscape of the late twentieth century *duppy state*, intra-community tensions and solidarities became a prominent agenda item as Black constituents wrestled over Rap music meaning-making and ongoing discourses of black unbeing. During the Congressional Hearing on Gangsta Rap and the Million Man March, Rap artefacts became a screen on which African Americans negotiated their communal politics and representations. Rap critics and supporters also used Rap music to query the nature of African American interiorities and negotiate the modes and meanings of the 'black community' and its agenda. As many of these debate participants articulated their embarrassment over how black communities were being represented before 'white America,' they also deliberated over who was well-suited to speak in (white) public spaces on behalf of African American interests. On each side of the debate, Black

[177] Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Hip Hop Revolution: The Culture and Politics of Rap* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 118. Gomorrah (along with its twin city Sodom) was an ancient kingdom situated along the Jordan River in the southern region of Canaan. This city was destroyed by God because of its sinfulness. In Abrahamic religions, Gomorrah is often synonymous with impenitent sin and the manifestation of divine retribution. In mainstream culture, references to Gomorrah are often intended as metaphors for vice, homosexuality, and moral deviation. The phrase "slouching towards Gomorrah" came to be associated with Gangsta Rap through the political commentary and book authored by former Supreme Court nominee Robert H. Bork who emerged as an outspoken critic of Rap music in 1996 when he asserted that Rap was debased and a reflection of the moral declension of the United States. Bork blamed Rap's popularity on "modern liberalism," which he claimed was besotted of "radical individualism" and other values that are fundamentally hostile to American freedom.
[178] Michael Eric Dyson, *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 185.

voices mobilized in order to, at the very least, address the existing symptoms of the *duppy state*, and at best, reveal the means by which post-coloniality might be imagined, mapped and realized.

In the case of those who advocated on behalf of women and gender issues, these actors gestured towards the complexities of 'the black community' to draw attention to Rap music's gender politics. In their critiques, women like Dr. C. DeLores Tucker and Dionne Warwick alerted hearing attendees to a growing tendency among rappers to use their lyrics and video imagery to depict gender discrimination, sexism, misogyny, and the degradation of black women. Reverend Butts, Minister Farrakhan, and Paris Eley echoed these critiques regarding Rap's problematic gender practice – though these men were not coming from the same position in terms of intimately understanding anti-woman discrimination, nor were they reaching the same conclusions. Unlike Tucker and Warwick who were critiquing Rap's anti-woman rhetoric and exploitation, Butts, Farrakhan and Eley insisted upon the importance of Black male rappers adopting an ethics of personal (social, moral and ethical) responsibility to reconcile continuous toxic masculinity. These patriarchs argued that Rap expressions were a reflection of where Black men had failed their families and communities. They maintained that the burden fell upon Black men to engage in the practice of atonement and reconciliation if they hoped to address the existing crisis within 'the black community.'

These critiques were also underscored by thin solidarity rhetoric insofar as these critics mobilized their generational authority (as the Civil Rights generation) to articulate their respectability politics and a nostalgia for "simpler" and "better" moments of gender and class practices. While these activists attempted to open up space to discuss toxic masculinity, they were also casting, rationalizing, regulating and in some cases muting what they identified as a pathological urban and working class attitude towards Black women. This kind of critique had the

additional effect of dignifying the gender practices of earlier African American generations as though Black women had not been ignored, taken for granted and in some cases treated badly under their watch. Some of the most famous of these moments were within the contexts of organizing during Black nationalist, Civil Rights and Black Power movements. In addition, this analysis appeared to convey that Rap gender relations compromised the seemingly unflawed liberation politics (and vision) of earlier eras.

Women's rights advocates and religious leaders also mobilized a parent-child language – which resembled authoritative practices – to exhibit their commitment to black youth, describe their inability to recognize their 'children,' and monitor the boundaries around what constituted 'appropriate' blackness and community practices. Participants like Tucker and Warwick referenced their roles as 'parents' to rappers who were their 'children' to legitimize their claim of a singular black community politics and text that only they (as older members of 'the Black community') were qualified to define. In this narrative, the Civil Rights generation was imagined as the legitimate representative of black communal politics. Conversely, rappers were framed as progeny and misled inheritors of the Civil Rights Movement. These discourses framed rappers as Black youth who suffered from a low self-esteem that prompted them to distort the nation's perception of black heterosexual relationships, and in effect also undermine the stability of the black family (imagined as heteronormative). McCann argues that this discourse allowed Civil Rights generation critics to nurse a narrative that rappers were unremorseful prodigal sons and daughters who had distorted and exploited the supposedly 'authentic' Black cultural heritage and liberation politics left to them by the Civil Rights generation.[179] On the other hand, leaders like Farrakhan articulated a paternalistic desire to care for the Hip Hop generation – namely those in

[179] McCann, "Contesting the Mark of Criminality," 167, 170-175.

working class urban spaces who were most vulnerable to the *duppy state*. While he expressed the need to recruit these young people into the NOI fold, he simultaneously suggested that these young people needed to address their personal failings and atone for their mistreatment of each other and Black women, as well as their abandonment of God and 'positive' family values.

There were also Black constituents who utilized a paternalistic parent-child language to stress the need to acknowledge change (or a lack thereof) over time insofar as the nature of the *duppy state*. Like members of her generation, Congresswoman Maxine Waters acknowledged that Rap contained problematic representations of gender relations and black criminality. However, she also suggested that the Hip Hop generation might have been utilizing alternative strategies to address black unbeing and the associated feelings of pain, hopelessness, deprivation, and isolation that urban working class communities experienced. Waters urged hearing participants to practice understanding and empathy, rather than castigate youth simply because they did not agree with their portrait of contemporary America. Waters maintained that the anti-Rap critique – which centered a concern over Rap music's supposed glorification of violence – was an attempt to distract audiences and delegitimize the Black youth critique regarding the continuous destruction of black communities across the nation (which was ripe with nuance and context). By mobilizing thick solidarity politics in the form of a class and age consciousness, Waters acknowledged that being Black in America was not a uniform experience and that there was a multiplicity of ways that the problems of race persisted even as the advancements of the Civil Rights era had served others. Finally, Waters considered the possibility that anti-Rap rhetoric may be symptomatic of a suspicious, and perhaps deliberate campaign to heighten anxieties over black criminality and therefore rationalize the *duppy state* desire towards black incarceration. Here, Waters gestured

towards the existence of a complex 'black community' and she suggested that it might be helpful to read Rap artefacts as good-will attempts to rupture the racial/colonial matrix.

There were also a number of Black constituents who reminded debaters that Rap content was a reflection of material inequalities, as well as a push back against a post-Civil Rights narrative that late twentieth century issues were a matter of personal irresponsibility. Media personalities Don Cornelius and Nelson George reminded hearing participants that Rap spoke of despair and hopelessness as a byproduct of urban economic and social dislocation and disintegration. The music also discussed the threat posed by the prison industrial complex, and unsympathetic government officials who laboured to sustain (or else absolutely ignored) these disparities. Here, Cornelius and George mobilized empathy and understanding for the working class and their narratives – which were framed as a deep cynicism – to suggest that rappers did not have the profound power (namely, personal responsibility) to transform circumstances that were out of their control. Otherwise put, both men used a class consciousness to illuminate the power of the *duppy state* to destroy and destabilize Black lives. These men also drew attention to how the *duppy state* had convinced some inside of Black circles that personal responsibility, rather than the false narrative of colourblindness, had permitted the success and upward mobility of a select few. Music executive David Harleston confirmed these observations and reminded hearing participants that silencing the messengers – namely, rappers – would not extinguish the problem of black unbeing.

Supporters and critics of Rap also questioned the role of the marketplace in (mis)guiding black youth, and in some cases, using their expressions to undermine the politics and representations of a coherent 'black community' text. These criticisms came from various voices inside and outside of the entertainment industry such as activists, academics, label executives, professionals from regulating bodies, media personalities, journalists, and even musicians

themselves. For example, music executive Ernie Singleton and media personality and activist Joseph E. Madison reinforced thin solidarities – namely, patriarchal, heteronormative and Black bourgeoisie values characteristic of certain members of the Civil Rights generation – to suggest that Rap was rooted in a specific working class 'immorality.' They defined this supposed depravity as poor parenting, the lack of nuclear family models, the absence of a virtuous work ethic, abuses of the welfare state, and unstable or unavailable educational and employment opportunities to facilitate personal uplift. These critics mobilized this logic to grant the Civil Rights generation experiential authority (in terms of being able to deal with institutional racism, coercive white power and state violence) over that of a 'wayward' Hip Hop generation.

The topic of youth naïveté was also used to criticize the Hip Hop generation and/or advocate on their behalf while exposing the nature of their vulnerability in an exploitative marketplace that actively worked on behalf of the *duppy state*. Activists like C. Delores Tucker drew an unambiguous parallel between Gangsta Rap's commercial intention, the transatlantic slave trade and plantation logics, and those who profited from what she interpreted as a sinister cycle of anti-black exploitation and oppression. Here Tucker detailed the intimate and manipulative relationship that existed between artistic freedom and entrepreneurship, corporate ethics and marketplace practices. And yet, Tucker's concern was also informed by thin solidarity concerns insofar as she problematized, and looked on in fear, at a set of marketplace practices that permitted the circulation of 'criminal' Rap discourses as a tool of resistance in the long Black liberation movement. Other critics like Singleton contended that while rappers were naïve, they remained culpable and accountable to their 'black community' for their role in creating problematic lyrics and images for capitalistic gain. Singleton suggested that rappers were not pawns in the record industry's game, nor were they simply a product of corporate exploitation and cultural

appropriation. Joseph E. Madison echoed Singleton's critique. He also claimed that Black youth needed counsel from the Civil Rights generation because their experiences in the music industry were indicative of their inability to understand 'the black community's' 'real' enemies.

The educators, academics and public intellectuals who joined these conversations – many of whom were closer in age to rappers and even of the Hip Hop generation – articulated a greater level of ambivalence on the subject of Rap music's supposed perversion. While they found the genre's sexism and misogyny problematic, these intellectuals exercised a greater level of empathy and nuance in their interrogation of Gangsta Rap and the calls for its censorship and outright banning. Both Professors Robin D.G Kelley and Tricia Rose maintained that Rap masculinity was never intended to be read as a prescription for actual gender relations. Instead, performances of Black masculinity – toxic as they might have been – were problematized (insofar as the sexism and misogyny) even as they were promoted as in the case of resistance narratives where Black male rappers rapped about institutional racism and various embodiments of authority. These intellectuals maintained that while the genre was rightfully lambasted for its sexism and toxic masculinity, it was wrongfully characterized as thoroughly sexist given that all forms of Rap were not deeply sexist and misogynistic. In mobilizing thick solidarity rhetoric, both academics cautioned critics about the dangers of singling out a minoritized and vulnerable population for sexist practices particularly when they were part of a much broader spectrum of American behaviours where patriarchal power was normalized and encouraged.

Despite ongoing assumptions that the Hip Hop generation was engaged in an 'us versus them' debate, the responses among rappers also reflected an uneven solidarity politics along the lines of generation and geography. This was particularly evident in the interview materials introduced at the 1994 Congressional Hearing on Gangsta Rap when a number of east coast rappers

were asked for their thoughts on the music of their west coast counterparts. In this footage, those identified as genre pioneers rationalized that early artists were not primarily driven by greed and status, and the artform's original intent did not include violence, sexism or misogyny. They maintained that these attributes were the outcome of geographical difference. They also gestured to an origin narrative of 'innocence' insofar as pioneers maintained that they were not interested in 'bastardizing' and compromising the integrity and original intention of their artform for profit. That said, there were other voices, namely that of rapper YoYo at the 1994 hearings and the exclusively male cohort on the *One Million Strong* Million Man March compilation, who stressed the need to take Gangsta Rap's reading of contemporary race relations seriously. These rappers mobilized thick solidarities to contextualize Rap's 'negative' narratives within a broader schema of ineffectual state policy, deepening inequality, a lack of transformative change, and the failings of the Civil Rights agenda. These rappers maintained that the dissatisfaction and noted anger over Rap narratives was an outcome of generational misunderstanding, an incongruous awareness of the issues that Black youth were facing in the late twentieth century, and an inability to acknowledge that the Civil Rights and Black Power movements had not resolved anti-black racism and Black unbeing for all. When YoYo argued that these problems "didn't start from a cassette tape," she was confirming that Rap should not be scapegoated for merely functioning as a screen on which problems – which were symptomatic of the *duppy state* – were mirrored and reflected.

Ultimately, the Congressional Hearing on Gangsta Rap and the Million Man March revealed that unlike the Civil Rights generation, Hip Hop youth had only ever witnessed an America in deep decline despite national narratives and myths to the contrary. Rap narrated a *duppy state* in full effect. In their music, rappers described the unraveling of progressive legislation, deindustrialization, economic restructuring, a white backlash against the Civil Rights agenda and

its gains, neoconservative politics and the rise of a punitive carceral state. If capitalism was black coffee, as Lipsitz's metaphor implied, and Hip Hop youth had accepted it "without sugar," then across their lifetimes Hip Hop youth had only known the bitterness of their working poor realities without any promise of tangible change.[180] By the mid-1990s, a number of Rap artists used their medium to reject the lofty mythology of the American Dream. Instead, many rappers supplanted the American Dream with a portrait of the *One Million Strong* "AmeriKKKan nightmare." These debates over Rap's portrait served as an example of how conservative critique tended to victim blame, absolve perpetrators, and obscure and erase deep readings of how power functioned.[181] For African Americans, and not merely rappers, this moment reflected a set of multi-directional attempts – and even their own complicity – in efforts to undermine b(l)ack looking and delegitimize, corral, and silence Black readings of power even at the level of popular culture.

[180] Senate, Hearings on Music Lyrics and Commerce, 154-155; Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark*, 172-173.
[181] Lipstiz, *Footsteps in the Dark*, 160, 172-173.

- EPILOGUE -
"This is America": Revisiting the Terrified and Terrorized in American Rap Discourses of the Twenty-First Century

"This is America / Don't catch you slippin' now."
– Childish Gambino[1]

On February 15, 2016, Compton-born rapper Kendrick Lamar took the stage at the Grammy Awards to perform his reading of American race relations as captured in his 2015 recording "The Blacker the Berry." As the stage lights brightened, the audience watched as Lamar emerged from the shadows in a blue prison jumpsuit with chains around his ankles and wrists to the sound of a wailing jazz saxophone. Behind him, four similarly attired black men shuffled along in single file and in rhythm reminiscent of an early twentieth century chain gang. When Lamar arrived at center stage, the room grew silent and he noisily swung his shackles around the microphone – the sound of captivity filling the room.[2] Lamar rapped:

> Once I finish this / if you're listening then I'm sure you will agree / Been feeling like this since I was sixteen / come to my senses / You never liked us anyway / bump your friendship, I meant it / I'm African-American / I'm African / I'm black as the moon / heritage of a small village, pardon my residence / Came from the bottom of mankind / My hair is nappy, you know that it's big / my nose is round and wide / You hate me don't you? / You hate my people, your plan is to terminate my culture / You know that you're evil / I want you to recognize that I'm a proud monkey / You vandalize my perception but can't take style from me / And this is more than destruction / I mean, I might press the button / so you know my discretion / I'm guardin' my feelings, I know that you feel it / You sabotage my community, makin' a killin' / You made me a killer / emancipation of a real healer.[3]

Immediately thereafter, the drums intensified, the prison hall began to smoke, the lights short-circuited, and the prisoners frantically threw off their shackles in the pit off-stage. Lamar continued

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[1] Childish Gambino, "This is America," 2018, (mcDJ Recording/RCA/Sony, 886447091500, 2018).
[2] Micah Singleton, "Grammys 2016: Watch Kendrick Lamar's Stunning Performance," The Verge, February 15, 2015, https://www.theverge.com/2016/2/15/11004624/grammys-2016-watch-kendrick-lamar-perform-alright-the-blacker-the-berry (accessed January 17, 2016).
[3] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."

to rap: "As we proceed / to give you what you need / Trap our bodies, but can't lock our minds."[4] He then threw his hands into the air in the protest gesture "hands up, don't shoot" that originated with the Black Lives Matter movement following the August 9, 2014 shooting of unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri police. The lights of the prison immediately went to black in what appeared to be a power outage.[5]

Like his Rap predecessors, Lamar's recording was an exegesis on race and power in 21st century America and the impact these dynamics continue to have on Black people. Lamar's recording began with: "Everything black / I don't want black / (They want us to bow) / I want everything black / I ain't need black / (Down to our knees) / Some white, some black / I ain't mean black / (And pray to a God) / I want everything black / (That we don't believe)."[6] Lamar's introductory vocals insinuated that the ecology of the Black experience in 21st century America entails enduring a climate of anti-blackness and the brutal architectures of white supremacy. This environment produces emotional and cognitive disorder as well as a tendency to articulate a simultaneous love and hate of one's blackness. In the opening bridge, Lamar gave insight into the root of his mental break. He began: "Six in the morn' / fire in the street / Burn, baby, burn / That's all I wanna see / And sometimes I get off watchin' you die in vain / It's such a shame they may call me crazy / They may say I suffer from schizophrenia or somethin' / But homie, you made me / Black don't crack, my nigga."[7] By referencing Ice T's 1987 single "6 N Tha Mornin'" – considered one of the defining tracks of Gangsta Rap – Lamar used a lyric sample to remind listeners of Los Angeles' history of rioting, as well as its violent material, psychic and experiential

[4] Alyssa Klein, "Kendrick Lamar's Unapologetically African Grammy Performance Was One For All the Ages," OKAYAfrica, February 16, 2016, https://www.okayafrica.com/kendrick-lamar-grammy-awards-performance-2016/ (accessed July 20, 2019).
[5] Singleton, "Grammys 2016."
[6] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."
[7] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."

geography. In these opening lines, Lamar was vague about why he delighted in observing death and fires that rage and destroy. He was ambiguous about who has unfairly diagnosed his mental break. However, Lamar was quite clear that his mental break was the result of trauma, and despite the violence, he was resilient and had not cracked under the pressure.

Lamar's "The Blacker the Berry" served as a poignant reminder of Rap music's continued and insistent practice to acknowledge, expose and converse with the *duppy state* amid the afterlives of slavery. In the recording's leading verse, Lamar identified an enemy – "you." He rapped: "Been feeling this way since I was 16 / came to my senses / You never liked us anyway / fuck your friendship / I meant it."[8] The identity of this enemy – who might be imagined as the *duppy state* – became clearer once Lamar acknowledged that this enemy was fed by the practice of anti-black racism. Lamar continued: "You hate me don't you? / You hate my people / Your plan is to terminate my culture / You're fuckin' evil / […] You sabotage my community / makin' a killin' / You made me a killer / emancipation of a real nigga."[9] Here, Lamar questioned the duppy's logic, outed the duppy's behavior as motivated by hatred and the desire to sabotage and exterminate African American communities, and unapologetically accused the duppy of malevolence. Lamar tied these observances to the destructiveness of American capitalism, and in particular those economic systems that profit from the process of emptying black bodies of being and re-making them in fungible commodities. Lamar then theorized how the project of modernity has affixed blackness as weaponized ("the nigga") – and therefore unbeing – through discourse. In Lamar's assessment, the *duppy state* has produced a black consciousness that continues to be deeply attuned to and burdened by black pain across the span of American history. In this recording and performance, Lamar became "duppy conqueror" – prepared and emboldened to vanquish the

[8] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."
[9] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."

ongoing threat of the formidable duppy that preserved itself by reupholstering its calculated arithmetic.

Like rappers before him, Lamar also rendered visible a number of ways to know the breadth of blackness even within a violent coloniality. He began with: " I'm African American / I'm African / I'm black as the moon / heritage of a small village pardon my residence / Came from the bottom of mankind / My hair is nappy, my dick is big / my nose is round and wide / […] I'm African American / I'm African / I'm Black as the heart of a fuckin' Aryan / I'm Black as the name of Tyrone and Darius."[10] Here, Lamar juxtaposed the term 'Black' while alluding to W.E.B Du Bois' double consciousness (of being a Black man and an American) to problematize how blackness has been both knowable and unknowable in the United States.[11] The recording's title "The Blacker the Berry," also recalled the title of Harlem Renaissance novelist Wallace Thurman's 1929 text *The Blacker the Berry: A Novel of Negro Life* which similarly drew on the themes of anti-black discrimination, colourism, and how African Americans have struggled with identity and notions of self-worth.[12] Lamar argued that blackness was at once bright as the moon's light, as dark as the hatred in a white supremacist's heart, as distant and unapologetic as a rural town in continental Africa, as fractured or melded together as a hybridized identity, as rooted as the birthplace of humankind, and as rootless as a community that has had its history, culture and knowledge erased by forced kidnapping. Blackness is as sexualized, pathologized, and scorned as are the phenotypical characteristics attributed to the black body. Blackness is both real and material, as much as it is produced through discourse. Lamar continued on in the tradition of

[10] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."
[11] For more on W.E.B Du Bois' notion of double consciousness, see, W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[12] For more on the subject matter of Thurman's novel, see, Wallace Thurman, *The Blacker the Berry: A Novel of Negro Life, reprint* (New York: Collier Books, 1970).

rappers who used their artform to articulate Black cartographies that were both deep and superficial. And yet, Lamar closed his description with the declaration: "I want you to recognize that I'm a proud monkey / You vandalize my perception but can't take style from me."[13] Here, Lamar reminded the *duppy state* that while coloniality has damaged the black psyche, it remained defeated in its efforts to pilfer black culture which continued to regenerate itself in spite of penetrating and reupholstered violence.

Like his Rap predecessors, Lamar's looking relations stressed that the duppy state was the outcome of (white) terrified consciousness that framed Black people as disposable. In Lamar's analysis, the *duppy state* refused to be buried, and it remained persistent in its precise and intentional surety to dispense brutality, withhold freedom, and restrict Black life. Lamar rapped:

> I mean, it's evident that I'm irrelevant to society / That's what you're telling me / penitentiary would only hire me / Curse me 'till I'm dead / Church me with your fake prophesizing that I'm gonna be just another slave in my head / Institutionalized manipulation and lies / Reciprocation of freedom only live in your eyes / You hate me don't you? / I know you hate me just as much as you hate yourself / Jealous of my wisdom and cards I dealt / […] This plot is bigger than me / it's generational hatred / It's genocism / it's grimy, little justification / You hate my people / I can tell cause it's threats when I see you / I can tell cause your ways deceitful / Know I can tell because you're in love with that desert eagle / Thinkin' maliciously, he get a chain then you gone bleed him.[14]

In a plot twist, Lamar diagnosed the *duppy state*'s malevolence as a mental disorder that produced anti-black racism as the illogical and unwarranted outcome of white self-hate and jealousy. He argued that this psychological break produced white contempt and a malicious intent to disturb, traumatize and 'bleed out' Black lives by pulling the trigger of a dessert eagle handgun.[15] This

[13] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."
[14] Lamar, "Blacker the Berry."
[15] The MRI Desert Eagle is a semi-automatic handgun made popular throughout a number of Hollywood live-action and thriller films that centered characters such as assassins, secret operatives and crime lords, and explored subjects such as military expeditions, failed heists, and dystopian and simulated cyber realities. The weapon was notable for chambering the largest centerfire cartridge magazine-fed, self-loading pistol.

duppy, in its desire to unceasingly haunt, frighten and work mischief, had mobilized a wide-ranging toolkit – everything from institutionalized religion to state level discourse – to achieve its ends. These outcomes included convincing Black people (and others as well) that African descended people lacked worth and were extraneous.

And yet, Lamar reminded his listeners that despite the ongoing violence and terror of the *duppy state*, Black people – and rappers more specifically – were resilient in their capacity to invert the meanings and functions of oppression. In an interview with *Billboard Magazine* following Lamar's performance on the Grammy stage, stylist Dianne Garcia explained that Lamar and his team designed the inmate jumpsuits with a glow-in-the-dark pattern that would only become visible under the projection of ultra-violet lighting. The sequence – 21-23-1831 – which was meant to be their prisoner number, was a reference to Nat Turner's Rebellion between August 21st and 23rd of 1831.[16] And as these inmates broke through their chains, dancehall musician Assassin sang the recording's chorus in Jamaican patois:

> A suh dem triit mi laka slaav, kaa mi blak / Woii, mi fiil wan hiiep a pien, kaa mi blak / I maan a se dem puot wii inna chain, kaa wii blak / A wach ya nou, big uol chain fuula raakz / An yu nuo sii di wip lef skyaar pon wi bak / Buot nuo wi aav a big wip paak pon di blok / O dem a se wii dyuum fram di staart, kaa wi blak / Memba diis, iivri riez staart fram di blak, jus memba dat.[17]

In standard English, the translation of Assassin's lyrics were:

> I said they treat me like a slave, cause me black / Woi, we feel a whole heap of pain, cause we black / And man a say they put me in a chain, cause we black / Imagine now, big gold chains full of rocks / How you no see the whip, left scars 'pon me back / But now we have a big whip parked 'pon the block / All them say we doomed from

[16] The aesthetic style of the number patterns were inspired by those used by the South Kenyan and North Tanzanian Maasai warriors who were known to oppose human trafficking and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Nat Turner was an enslaved African American who led a rebellion of enslaved and free blacks in Southampton County, Virginia; Shira Karsen, "Kendrick Lamar's Stylist Shares the Hidden Messages in His Grammys Performance: Exclusive," *Billboard*, February 22 2016, http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6882840/kendrick-lamar-stylist-grammys-performance-hidden-messages (accessed December 30 2016).
[17] Lamar, "The Blacker the Berry"; Klein, "Kendrick Lamar's Unapologetically African Grammy Performance Was One For All the Ages."

> the start, cause we black / Remember this, every race start from the black / Just remember that.[18]

Here, Assassin's lyrics contrasted black non-personhood against the capacity of Black populations to resist, recast and re-create the meanings associated with their oppression. The chains used to constrict black bodies under enslavement were re-imagined as gold necklaces adorned with diamonds. The whips used to punish, coerce, control and traumatize black bodies were re-envisioned as expensive cars that they now owned as expressions of their wealth, and in some cases financial freedom. Assassin ended the verse by asserting that despite the commonplace discourse that black communities are condemned to tragedy, this sentence is not exclusive to black people. Rather, if Africa was the cradle of humankind, then every racial community is fated.

This theory of shared fate and human penance was most evident in rapper Childish Gambino's recording "This is America" which captured Rap's critique that Black people had been terrorized by coloniality and framed as terrifying by *duppy state* discourses. When rapper Gambino released the music video for "This is America" on May 5th, 2018, American audiences were perplexed and horrified by the images of black terror and dehumanization. The video opened with a shirtless Gambino dancing in an empty warehouse as he slowly approached a seated and shoeless Black man playing guitar. Only 53 seconds into the video, Gambino assumed a stance similar to the Jim Crow caricature. He pulled out a handgun and shot the man in the back of the head. Gambino immediately broke the fourth wall and told the audience: "this is America, don't catch you slippin' up." The killing marked the first significant shift in the instrumentation from a folk-inspired acoustic melody to a dark and pulsing trap beat reminiscent of the current era of Rap music. As Gambino danced throughout the warehouse with a group of children in school uniforms, he used his body to convey a sense of unruliness and terror; he widened his eyes, smiled and then

[18] Lamar, "The Blacker the Berry."

grimaced, contorted as do zombies, and then seductively danced.[19] As they moved in the foreground, the camera also captured chaos in the background; frantic running crowds, stalled police cars, theft, scenes of violence, children recording violence with their cellphones, men riding hooded on horseback, abandoned cars and cars on fire, and screams in the distance. Eventually, Gambino fell upon a room where a church choir jubilantly sang. Seconds later someone from off-screen tossed Gambino a rifle and he murdered the choir. In both instances of predatorial killing, Gambino stood calmly and gently laid his weapons on a red cloth that a child held out to him as the slain bodies were callously dragged away. As Gambino continued to dance, the lyrics "get your money Black man" played.[20] The video ended with Gambino who ran through a darkened portion of the warehouse as the following lyrics played, "You just a Black man in this world / You just a barcode, ayy / […] Drivin' expensive foreigns, ayy / You just a big dawg, yeah / I kenneled him in the backyard / No, probably ain't life to a dog / For a big dog."[21] As the tunnel brightened, the audience watched Gambino's face and a non-descript crowd of people who chased him. In the final sequence, Gambino was represented as a commodity, a consumer, an animal, and as a "big dawg" – otherwise put, at the top of his profession. In "This is America," Gambino, like Black people caught in the web of the *duppy state*, was both the terrorized and the terrifying.[22]

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[19] Choreographer Sherrie Silver incorporated a number of viral dances in the video such as the South African Gwara Gwara and "Shoot" popularized by BlocBoy JB. Kaitlyn Greenidge, "'This Is America' Choreographer Sherrie Silver: Artists Shouldn't Shy Away From Violence," *Glamour*, May 9, 2018, https://www.glamour.com/story/this-is-america-choreographer-sherrie-silver-interview (accessed July 20, 2019); Eric Skelton, "The Story Behind Childish Gambino's Symbolic 'This Is America' Dance Choreography," *Complex Magazine*, May 8, 2018, https://www.complex.com/pigeons-and-planes/2018/05/childish-gambino-this-is-america-dance-choreographer-sherrie-silver-interview (accessed July 20, 2019); Childish Gambino, "This is America," *YouTube,* Posted by Donald Glover (YouTube page) on May 5, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY&index=7&list=PLdpMEiJ7wLF2AfYDg9oSTMZKcEhoUS8yk (accessed on July 20, 2019).

[20] Childish Gambino, "This is America," *(Lyric) Genius*, https://genius.com/Childish-gambino-this-is-america-lyrics (accessed on July 20, 1019).

[21] Childish Gambino, "This is America," *(Lyric) Genius*, https://genius.com/Childish-gambino-this-is-america-lyrics (accessed on July 20, 1019).

[22] Gambino, "This is America," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY&index=7&list=PLdpMEiJ7wLF2AfYDg9oSTMZKcEhoUS8

The "This is America" moment also captured the ongoing struggle among Americans to make sense and meaning out of the effects of race and power on their lives. Following the release of the video, audience members took to social media and media outlets more broadly to hypothesize about the meanings in "This is America." Some audience members believed that the man that Gambino murdered was Trayvon Martin's father.[23] Others reasoned that Gambino's clothing was a reference to bondage and emancipation – that is, his pants and shoes referred to American Civil War confederate uniforms, and his two gold chains were a double entendre for bondage and Rap consumerism.[24] Justin Simien, the film director of *Dear White People*, pointed out that Gambino's exaggerated expressions were reminiscent of Jim Crow. Some suggested that Gambino was gesturing to how some Black performers compromise their integrity and dignity by embodying a caricature and shell of blackness to entertain (white) mainstream audiences.[25] Viewers argued that Gambino used dancing throughout the video to suggest that 21st century black popular entertainment has distracted the public from the violence against Black people. Viewers also drew attention to the care Gambino took with his weapons. They contended that Gambino critiqued how Americans valued guns more than they did the lives of Black people.[26] Audiences also took note of another double entendre – Gambino's reference to "celly" – as the camera panned to Black youth filming the warehouse chaos. Journalist Martha Tesema claimed that Gambino was

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yk; "Big dawg," *Urban Dictionary*, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Big%20Dawg (accessed July 20, 2019).

[23] Lisa Respers France, "That's not Trayvon Martin's dad in 'This Is America'," *CNN*, May 8, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/08/entertainment/trayvon-martin-father-this-america/index.html (accessed July 2019). Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old unarmed African American high school student who was fatally shot by George Zimmerman on February 26, 2012 in Sanford, Florida in an act of vigilante violence. In the aftermath of the murder, Zimmerman was acquitted at trial after claiming self-defense.

[24] Taylor Ferber, "11 Hidden Details In 'This Is America' That Fans On Twitter Can't Stop Talking About," *Bustle*, May 7, 2018, https://www.bustle.com/p/11-hidden-details-in-this-is-america-that-fans-on-twitter-cant-stop-talking-about-9010002 (accessed July 20, 2019).

[25] Zack Sharf, "'Dear White People' Creator Justin Simien Analyzes Donald Glover's 'This Is America': Jim Crow, Black Youth, and More," *IndieWire*, May 7, 2018, https://www.indiewire.com/2018/05/justin-simien-analyzes-donald-glover-this-is-america-1201961450/ (accessed July 20, 2019).

[26] Ferber, "11 Hidden Details In 'This Is America' That Fans On Twitter Can't Stop Talking About."

referencing the many murders of Black people by police captured on cellphones, while others argued that Gambino was instead gesturing to a colloquial term for prison cell blocks, and therefore the phenomenon of mass incarceration.[27] Many viewers laboured over the video's violence – particularly the choir massacre. A number of audience members claimed that the scene reminded them of the Charleston church massacre.[28] Audiences articulated confusion – and even anger – over Gambino's choice to represent the murder of Black people by white Americans as an instance of 'Black-on-Black' violence. They also wondered how these cases of murder connected to the final scene where Gambino appeared to be running in fear. Some viewers claimed that Gambino was running from an angry white mob, and this scene must have been a reference to Jordan Peele's 2017 horror film *Get Out*, where in an unanticipated victory, a Black man ran for his life and escaped the threat of white supremacist bodysnatching and brainwashing.[29]

The work of Lamar and Gambino – and for that matter, rappers more broadly – has underscored an America in ongoing crisis that requires profound reinvention if Americans are to achieve a praxis of radical humanness. Katherine McKittrick and Alexander G. Weheliye argue that in racist environments shaped by plantocratic and white supremacist (market) systems, music has offered Black people a strategy – constrained as it might be – by which to track black life as livingness.[30] Shaheen Ariefdien and Rico Chapman maintain that within the vocabulary of black

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[27] Ferber, "11 Hidden Details In 'This Is America' That Fans On Twitter Can't Stop Talking About,"; Martha Tesema, "All the things you might have missed in Donald Glover's 'This Is America' video," *Mashable*, May 6, 2018, https://mashable.com/2018/05/06/donald-glover-this-is-america-breakdown/ (accessed July 20, 2019).
[28] The Charleston church massacre was a racially motivated church shooting committed by Dylan Roof, a 21-year old white supremacist. The incident took place on June 17, 2015 in Charleston, South Carolina during bible study. The church, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, is considered one of the oldest black churches in the United States and has long been a site for community organization around civil rights. After Roof was arrested by police, he confessed to the massacre, and admitted that he did so in the hope of igniting a race war. The mass shooting was deemed a hate crime, and the shooter was eventually sentenced to death. For more on the Charleston church massacre, see, Lulu Garcia-Navarro, "The Charleston Church Massacre And 'Grace Will Lead Us Home'," *NPR*, June 16, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2019/06/16/733158492/the-charleston-church-massacre-and-grace-will-lead-us-home (accessed July 20, 2019).
[29] Ferber, "11 Hidden Details In 'This Is America' That Fans On Twitter Can't Stop Talking About."
[30] Katherine McKittrick and Alexander G. Weheliye, "808s & Heartbreak," *Propter Nos* 2:1 (Fall 2017), 21.

popular culture, Hip Hop is "medicine, coded as music" and it has given practitioners and audiences alike a "way of being in the world and making sense of it."[31] Music, music-making and music-sharing has provided black communities with an ethno-racial and ethno-spatial epistemology to navigate, resist, refuse and heal from the toxic violence produced by enslavement, the afterlives of slavery and discourses of unbeing. It has also generated a repository of collective memory, shared conditions, and a source of moral instruction, even as that medicine can have problematic side-effects in the form of sexism, misogyny and homophobia.[32] McKittrick and Weheliye maintain that music is where Black people learn from and about each other, express their thoughts and emotions, and open up attachments to musical narratives, genealogies, and sounds. Music is one of the social locations where black communities can practice and establish black humanness in a world that refuses black life. Black musicians use their medium to re-direct conversations on race and power, reconstitute notions of the 'modern' nation-state, and press the public to interrogate the category of human.[33] And now that Hip Hop has reached a global audience, the public's admiration for practitioners' contributions to art, innovation and conversations about race and power is evident in accolades such as Kendrick Lamar's 2018 Pulitzer Prize and DJ Grandmaster Flash's 2019 Polar Prize (also known as the Nobel Prize for Music).[34] Kyle T. Mays argues that Hip Hop's power has been recognized globally because it is an inherently decolonial artform that can and has been taken up by a broad cross-section of oppressed peoples

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[31] Shaheen Afriefdien and Rico Chapman, "Hip Hop, Youth Activism, and the Dilemma of Coloured Identity in South Africa," in *Ni Wakati: Hip Hop and Social Change in Africa*, edited by Msia Kibona Clark and Mickie Mwanzia Koster (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 99.
[32] McKittrick and Weheliye, "808s & Heartbreak," 21; Afriefdien and Chapman, "Hip Hop, Youth Activism, and the Dilemma of Coloured Identity in South Africa," 99.
[33] McKittrick and Weheliye, "808s & Heartbreak," 21.
[34] Carl Lamarre, "Watch Kendrick Lamar Receive the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Music," *Billboard*, May 30, 2018, https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/hip-hop/8458599/kendrick-lamar-pulitzer-prize-2018 (accessed July 20, 2019); Mark Beech, "Grandmaster Flash Presented With Sweden's $130,000 Polar Prize, 'Nobel For Music'," *Forbes*, June 11, 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/markbeech/2019/06/11/grandmaster-flash-presented-with-swedens-130000-polar-prize-nobel-for-music/#b7e797365274 (accessed July 20, 2019).

within and beyond the borders of the United States. Mays maintains that Hip Hop culture serves as a mode and site of resistance where disempowered populations can disrupt the effects of multiple colonialisms and assert their humanity.[35] McKittrick and Weheliye suggest that this process enables a prioritization of embodied knowledge and a radical reinvention of the self.[36] Through Rap music, whether within the United States or beyond its borders, rappers continue to use their artform to press the public to treat this question of a humanity yet to be recognized and a freedom yet to come with committed sincerity.

If we wish to address the state of emergency that rappers have alerted us to, we must recognize that radical humanness requires the commitment of all those engulfed in the violence of the *duppy state*. In his discussion of race and nation in the twenty-first century, Gilroy uses the metaphor of water and the "peculiar theatre of power found at sea" to clarify what the encounters between the properly human and the supposedly infrahuman have been across history. Gilroy maintains that at sea, we bear witness to the composite of human frailty, vulnerability and interdependency. Gilroy gestures to the risky, and potentially deadly sea-travel activities undertaken by the fugitives and refugees of the past and present, as well as the perils of flood and the emergencies it produces. And yet, the project of humanness is not merely the responsibility of the fugitives and refugees immersed in the danger of the sea. Gilroy maintains that in these moments of crisis, we can learn about the responsibility that we have to others, and what acts of humane generosity and selflessness are required to avert or stall crisis. Gilroy argues that when we mobilize sympathy and solidarity in these moments of emergency, we work against the effects of

[35] Kyle T. Mays, "Decolonial Hip Hop: Indigenous Hip Hop and the Disruption of Settler Colonialism," *Cultural Studies* 33:3 (2019): 460-461.
[36] McKittrick and Weheliye, "808s & Heartbreak," 21.

slow and traumatic violence and indifference. This is what Gilroy calls the "humanizing possibilities of conviviality and care."[37]

I support Gilroy's call, and have used the story of Rap's 'Terrordome' to demonstrate that if we are to treat Black life in America – in the late twentieth century and beyond – with care, we must all commit ourselves to this emergency and we cannot limit our acts of care to simplistic readings of identity, citizenship and progress.[38] Rather, rappers deliberately recounted the effects of coloniality on their lives to demonstrate how their humanness had been withheld or explicitly refused *amid* these narratives of progress. By unmasking the disturbance of the *duppy state* in the late twentieth century, and the dehumanization of Black people during its ongoing wreckage, this dissertation outlines how rappers put forth a determined refusal of the world as they knew it. Like their musical predecessors, rappers used their art to read through the prism and trappings of race in hopes of producing new varieties of humanism. And as rappers made their readings and refusals public, they also fielded the discourses of the terrorized and terrified and unmasked the logic that underscored their creation. In this dissertation, I have centered the voices of rappers to demonstrate what it took and will continue to take to respond to and confront the *duppy state* and the emergencies of our time if we are to build a different humanist ethos.[39]

In twenty-first century America, the nation's insistent attachment to race and race-thinking continues to power and re-shape the *duppy state*. It lives in the surveillance practices and abuses of power of police and border agents. It lives in the vigilante violence that 'real' Americans exact on those imagined as vulnerable and deemed 'alien' in public discourse. It lives at the ballot box.

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[37] Paul Gilroy, "Long Read | Never Again: Refusing race and salvaging the human," *New Frame*, June 20, 2019, https://www.newframe.com/long-read-refusing-race-and-salvaging-the-human/?fbclid=IwAR0ZZyuZV9HswmTBVxGtoT_RG1g4pEtSpY2f05mqhGZOIEAA24NzlXjeB_U (accessed July 20, 2019).
[38] Gilroy, "Long Read | Never Again."
[39] Gilroy, "Long Read | Never Again."

It lives in microaggressions, and in the violent political rhetoric of the most powerful state actors in American office. It lives in efforts to resist political correctness and conviviality, alter the limits of what can be said publicly, and restore a narrative of race and nation that silences and erases the voices of the many. In this racially polarizing ecosystem characterized by mass incarceration, detention and deportation, the humanity of those imagined as 'inferior' or outside of the nation continually fluctuates between infrahuman and unhuman, but rarely if ever fully towards human. And if we are to ever dismantle racial hierarchy and the logics and practices that stage the reupholstering of the *duppy state*, we must focus our attention on appetites of power and how that very power borders and limits humanness.

In the Trump era, as history, culture and (mis)information have been weaponized in discourse to reproduce the *duppy state*, historians have a particularly important role to play in efforts to unravel its ongoing power and negate its continued refusals of black livingness. In this dissertation, I have attempted to use history as a tool of humanitarian ethic, in part because I am interested in how historians can usefully apply their ability to distill complex histories of power to shape a fullness of humanity yet to come. In a historical moment when art, literature and history (the humanities) have increasingly come under attack, I wonder if and how we can capture the generosity, empathy, care, rapture, enthusiasm, provocation, tenacity and productive anger to resist power that is so very often characteristic of the historical actors about whom we write. Can we use our work to elaborate on what Gilroy calls "a hydrophanic ethics" that is especially and uniquely revealed in moments of emergency like the late twentieth century that birthed Rap music?[40] This dissertation reflects an attempt to use cultural history as an act of reporting work and an ethics of care. It reads culture to distill the relationship between power, language, performance and historical

[40] Gilroy, "Long Read | Never Again."

context with particular attention to how the collision of these factors wreaked mischief in people's lives. And in doing so, this dissertation has contributed to a substantial body of literature on race, power and culture that reveals a changing same where racial fears, anxieties and advantages have been coded, disavowed and denied with precision to maintain America's status quo.

Bearing witness to the 'Terrordome' has convinced me that while historians are preoccupied with the past, we must always use our work to address the emergencies of the present as we labour to imagine and invent the future. Our discipline calls us to empower the public as well as ourselves. Our discipline calls us to identify contemporary abuses of power and forewarn of the dangers to come when we do not approach the goal of radical humanism as always vulnerable, and for many, always in a state of emergency. And if we are to commit ourselves entirely to rescuing the category of the human from the clutches of the *duppy state*, then the study of history can usefully serve as a tool to remind others of how not to fall into the trappings of repetition. To do this work, Gilroy asks us to endorse, prepare for, and participate in the "collective work of salvage."[41] He maintains that this effort requires more than rescuing the dehumanized from the peril of coloniality, for the *duppy state* has shaped the contours of humanity for all. That is, coloniality has fashioned who and what we all imagine ourselves to be, rather than what we can do in service of others.[42] Writing a history of the 'Terrordome' has reminded me that we cannot afford to reupholster the *duppy state* – the cost has and continues to be too high. These patterns reflect an America ensnared in a cyclical emergency of coloniality that even we as historians – with our knowledge of patterns, mistakes and failed attempts – have not yet figured out how to break. And while this remains America, the historical record also reveals that in spite of persistent continuity, change is inevitable. This possibility will take the work of reclamation. And while

[41] Gilroy, "Long Read | Never Again."
[42] Gilroy, "Long Read | Never Again."

Gilroy cautions us that "there is still time for that operation," he also reminds us that the time we do have is "not much."[43] If we are genuinely committed to the promise of radical progress, then we must also recognize that our (un)willingness to act in these moments of emergency will tell us just as much about the humanness of those beaten down by the *duppy state* as it will about our own.

[43] Gilroy, "Long Read | Never Again."

- A NOTE ON SOURCES -

Expanding the Archive

This dissertation analyzes four subsets of primary sources produced between the years 1979 and 1995 to examine the role of American Rap music within the context of a broader narrative of race and power in the era of mass incarceration. This project uses a breadth of historical artefacts to broaden the definition and uses of the archive. In doing so, this dissertation captures voices that are characteristic of the archive as well as absent from the archive. As a historian working with material culture, I mobilized the practice of looking as well as listening (to historical subjects who spoke for themselves in the archival record) to collect, review and analyze all source material.

In order to collect a significant number of these materials, I consulted four library archives and a series of public and private platforms that house cultural products. First, I visited three American archives: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture located in Harlem, New York; New York Public Library for the Performing Arts located in Manhattan, New York; and Cornell University's Library & Hip Hop Collection, located in Ithaca, New York. The first two archives housed the majority of newspaper and magazine clippings, written and recorded artist interviews, radio and television broadcast transcriptions, concert reviews, photos and press packets used in this dissertation. Cornell University's archive was instrumental in providing an understanding of the dynamics between musicians, labels, executives and public relations administrators as a result of the Bill Adler collection. This archival collection included first-hand accounts in the form of public relations communications documents and personal letters of correspondence. Cornell University's archive offered access to the Buddy Esquire and Charlie Ahearn

collections that contained an extensive assortment of event flyers and promotional materials for music and film events. In order to accumulate recorded music, interview footage, live performance footage, music videos, films, television episodes, newscasts, and public gatherings such as the Million Man March, I consulted a combination of documentaries, remastered DVD collections, C-SPAN online archives, *YouTube* postings and local record stores. York University also provided access to artist biographies and autobiographies, chart listings, congressional hearings, and district court case transcriptions.

This dissertation also includes a small grouping of oral interviews. These semi-structured interviews were conducted with five musicians and one film director. Prior to the interviews, all documents were reviewed and approved by York University's ethics board. Each interviewee also provided written approval before the interview. The interviews ranged from a half hour to two-and-a half hours. All of the interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and stored in a locked facility for the length of the study. Interviews were framed by both open and close-ended questions which were meant to prompt interviewees and gain further insight into their artistic practice and music/film industry experiences. There was some variability in questioning; this was mostly in terms of the order of the questions and the probes that were used. This interview format was particularly useful in creating a less ritualized interview experience and allowing the interviewee to provide a deep and expansive reading of their personal and professional histories. In terms of choosing participants, I largely looked for interviewees who had extensive experience in the culture industry, were willing to share their experiences, and who were accessible to me (either via personal correspondence, the snowball method, or

on the recommendation of other industry members with whom I had an existing relationships).

Database Rationale and Process

This dissertation archives, amplifies and centers the voices of Black musicians in order to systematically track their patterns of knowledge production. A central goal of this project was to utilize the lyrics, aesthetics, images and performances of rappers (and Black musicians of other genre varieties) to give them the space and ability to tell their own stories of the *duppy state* in their own words. In order to do so, I created a database that spans the late 1970s through to mid-1990s. This database analyzes a broad cross-section of artists that span five genres: Soul, Funk, Disco, R&B (and New Jack Swing), and Rap. The database, which was created over a two-year period (2012-2014), maps the contributions of 77 artists (their recordings and transcribed lyrics from solo, group and soundtrack albums). This database includes 1,965 recordings across 203 live and studio albums.

In order to compile a list of artists, I relied on a number of factors. First, I determined the status of each artist within their respective genres – namely, did cultural and music critics consider these artists pioneers or key musicians who made significant and vital contributions to the popularity and longevity of the genre. Second, I considered their ability to achieve chart success and visibility on the black popular music charts, followed by their capacity to crossover into the mainstream market onto the Top 40 *Billboard* chart. Finally, I ascertained whether they had established an enduring legacy within their genre, and whether they had been memorialized within the larger canon of black popular music.

In order to assemble the database, I listened to a series of albums, transcribed the album's lyrics, and tracked the key conceptual ideas conveyed throughout the material. In an effort to understand and describe the data drawn together in this database, I wanted to become intimately familiar with it. Before engaging in any formal analysis, I spent time listening to each of the recordings and transcribing the lyrics in documents that specified the artist, album and year the album material was released. I then spent time reading and re-reading my data. I did so in order to create a repository of lyrics that I could later use in a close textual reading against Hip Hop studies canon, existing theoretical models, and the theory I have built. These lyrics, in many regards, formed the bedrock of my analysis of Rap's 'Terrordome' and the functions of the *duppy state* according to rappers.

After listening to and reading through the lyrics for a first time, I then listened a second time to record a list of key themes raised by the artists within singular recordings. This initial step of descriptive coding allowed me to capture whatever appeared to be salient in the recordings, and an evocative attribute of the Rap materials of the period. In order to compile a master list of themes, I determined the large-scale patterns that emerged. This process allowed me to hear and read data that appeared to be similar, and to distinguish between what was and appeared to be dissimilar. Coding the bits of data also gave me the opportunity to divide a massive amount of data into manageable portions and initial units of analysis. The codes that I developed while engaging in this process were both inductive (emerged from the data) and deductive (imposed from existing concepts in Hip Hop and Black Studies literature). As a historian, this process also allowed me to label key personalities and behaviours in Rap music, as well as important events and experiences that I would later review in the analysis portion of the project. I then established my data

management process. I decided to lay out each code in an excel sheet (that was part of a larger excel file). On each of these sheets, I listed each artist alongside one another in a chronological and alphabetical order for comparative purposes. This database sheet was password protected and stored on two separate hard-drives in an electronic format. I found that across the sub-sections of the database some themes reappeared in other musical eras, while other themes were only raised by one sub-section of artists.

In the next stage, I began analyzing the data to establish similar and dissimilar themes or trends. Throughout this stage of analysis, I was interested in describing the text data (coding it), examining the codes, organizing the codes into themes, and making connections between the codes (and later the themes). I also laid out the findings in numerical data as part of a spreadsheet to document the tendencies (and dispersion of those tendencies) and establish the relationships between variables. In some instances (as indicated in the body of the dissertation), this numerical data was represented in the form of pie charts and bar graphs to visualize the tendencies and dispersion (how far apart the data are) of those tendencies. This process helped me assess which codes and themes had a relationship to one another, and what explanations existed for the relationships between these data bits. By determining the broad trends across historical periods and within the work of singular artists, I was better able to visualize how each artist's lyrical content shifted over time in relation to one's contemporaries. Once I compiled a master list of codes (and later the themes), I then listened to the music (and read along with the transcribed lyrics) for a third time to track the usage of these themes in singular recordings. My hope was to determine whether larger scale patterns existed within the lyrical practices of the genre.

In the case of numerical data, I first needed to determine what type of data I was interested in assessing and representing by numbers. I found that I was most interested in representing nominal data – that is, the frequency counts of distinct groups of information. For example, I took steps to determine how many artists were interested in discussing drug abuse versus alcohol abuse. Here, I hoped to assess how many artists discussed particular thematic content, what kinds of themes appeared, and what was the percentage of each thematic grouping in Rap lyrics. This approach to identifying patterns and explanations in the data involved examining each code and theme for a thorough description and explanation.

Finally, once I organized the database in chronological and thematic order, and reviewed the data, I needed to establish the stability of my findings, explanations and overall patterns and interconnections. I did so by drawing on concepts and theories in the broad cross section of literature that makes up my secondary source base. In doing so, I was able to contextualize the results that materialized. I was also able to conceive of concepts that would help clarify what the data appeared to be telling me. This process of theory building gave me the opportunity to formulate the data into logical, systematic and explanatory schemes. This multi-directional inductive process also allowed me to determine whether my ideas had support from the data. When I completed this process of thinking through my data using literature and theory building, I was able to speak with considerable confidence about the breadth and depth of the data findings and the theories that rendered the data knowable. I then used this database to create particular angles of argumentation regarding the lyrical trends and knowledge production of Black artists in chapters two and three.

This database was organized in three sub-sections. The first section is focused on Soul and Funk recordings between 1968 and 1979. This section formed the basis for the quantitative and qualitative analysis of chapter one – which was initially only an exploration of Soul and Funk music produced in the 1960s and 1970s. Later on in the dissertation writing process, I expanded chapter one to include a history of black popular music since the arrival of Africans in the in the geographies that would become the United States. These data were later used in an article that I produced (and have cited in chapter one) about Soul and Funk recordings during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. The second subsection includes Rap recordings between 1980 and 1990. This sub-section informed points of analysis in chapter two. Finally, the third sub-section is a comparative analysis of soundtrack renderings from the Blaxploitation and New Black Realism film cycles. This section was initially used to produce a comparative reading of Soul, Funk and Gangsta Rap (in what was to be a chapter about the synergy between black popular music and black popular film), however the chapter has since been revised to think through the central debates about Gangsta Rap. While the initial chapter about film soundtracks was removed from the final draft, I have continued to explore and analyze the data in what is now being transformed into a distinct article for publication.

In the first sub-section on Soul and Funk recordings between 1968 and 1979, the database was separated into twenty-two themes and it examined a total of 1,123 recordings across 126 live and studio albums. The artists under review were: Curtis Mayfield, Donny Hathaway, Gil Scott-Heron, Isaac Hayes, James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, Sly & the Family Stone and Stevie Wonder. The themes that emerged included: activism; black community; collectivism; criminality and violence; drugs and

alcohol; employment, under-employment and unemployment; environmentalism; equity; family and children; friendship; gender and sexuality; local, state and federal structural inequities; partying and leisure; personal introsepection; poverty; pro-black sentiment; religion and faith; romance (heterosexual); sex (heterosexual); the third world (Global South); urban decay; and war and peace.

In the second sub-section on Rap recordings between 1980 and 1990, the database was separated into thirty-five themes and examined a total of 763 recordings across 71 studio albums. The artists under review were: Afrika Bambaataa, Big Daddy Kane, Boogie Down Productions, De La Soul, Doug E. Fresh & The Get Fresh Crew, Eric B & Rakim, Grandmaster Flash, Ice T, Kurtis Blow, LL Cool J, MC Lyte, Public Enemy, Queen Latifah, Run DMC, Salt-N-Pepa, Sugarhill Gang, The Fat Boys, The Sequence, Tribe Called Quest and Whodini. The themes that emerged included: Africa; beauty; black pride and afrocentricism; children and youth; Civil Rights and Black Power movements; criminality and violence; drugs and alcohol; employment; fashion; food; freedom and justice; gangs; gender equity; government; health and hygiene; hegemonic masculinity; homosexuality and homophobia; individuality; inner city; knowledge production; partying and leisure; policing; poverty; pregnancy; prison; religion and faith; romance (heterosexual); sex (heterosexual); self-determination; skills boasting; enslavement; status and success; stereotypes; unity and peace; and wealth and consumption.

In the final sub-section on soundtrack renderings from the Blaxploitation and New Black Realism film cycles, the database was separated into twenty-six themes and examined two film soundtrack cycles, and a total of 79 recordings across 6 soundtrack albums. The artists under review were: 2 Live Crew, Ant Banks, Boogie Down

Productions, Brand Nubian, Christopher Williams, Chubb Rock, Cold 187um, Color Me Badd, Compton's Most Wanted, Curtis Mayfield, Da Lench Mob, Danny Madden, DJ Quik, Earth Wind and Fire, Essence, Force One Network, F.S. Effect, Guru, Guy, Hi-Five, Ice Cube, Ice T, Isaac Hayes, J.F.N., Johnny Gill, Kam, Keith Sweat, Kenya Gruv, KK, Kokane, LeVert, Main Source, MC Eiht, Monie Love, Mz. Kilo, Pete Rock & CL Smooth, Queen Latifah, Quincy Jones, Stanley Clarke, Spice 1, Smooth, Tevin Campbell, The Cutthroats, Too $hort, Tone! Toni! Tone!, Troop, UGK and Yo Yo. The themes that emerged included: black pride and afrocentricism; children and family; community; consciousness and activism; criminality and violence; drugs and alcohol; death; employment and unemployment; equity and freedom; gangs; introspection; inner city; partying and leisure; money and wealth; policing; pregnancy; poverty; power structures; prison; religion and faith; romance (heterosexual); sex (heterosexual); stereotypes; the third world (Global South); war and anti-war sentiments; and women.

Artists Investigated Throughout the Dissertation

Aside from the database, this dissertation also examined the recordings, music videos, live performances, biographies/autobiographies, and press material of artists who were not included in the database. Below is a full list of the artists and genres reviewed throughout the dissertation (distinguished by chapter). Listed below there are thirty-six genre varieties of black popular music. Across the entire dissertation I have reviewed the work (in its entirety or select contributions) of 187 Black musicians (129 of which are rappers and 4 of which are Hip Hop deejays). They include:

Chapter 1 (17th century - late 20th century)

Genres:
Work Songs in bondage, Folk Spirituals, Blackface Minstrelsy, Arranged Spirituals, Rural Blues, Electrified Blues, Circus Sideshow Performances, Ragtime, Jazz (New Orleans Jazz, Hot Jazz, Bebop, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Dixieland Revival, Cool Jazz and West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Modal Jazz, Free Jazz, Latin Jazz, Post-Bop, Soul Jazz, Jazz Fusion, Jazz Funk, Smooth Jazz, Acid Jazz, Nu Jazz, Jazz Rap, Punk Jazz, Jazzcore, Gospel, Rhythm and Blues, Rock N Roll, Soul, Funk, Disco and Rap.

Artists:
Billie Holiday, Chuck Berry, Count Basie, Curtis Mayfield, Dizzy Gillespie, Donny Hathaway, Duke Ellington, Fisk Jubilee Singers, Gil Scott-Heron, Isaac Hayes, James Brown, James Scott, Louis Armstrong, Marvin Gaye, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, Scott Joplin, Sly & the Family Stone, Stevie Wonder and Teddy Wilson.

Chapter 2 (1979 - 1990)

Genres:
Disco, R&B and Rap

Artists:
A Tribe Called Quest, Afrika Bambaataa, Bel Biv Devoe, Big Daddy Kane, Bobby Brown, Boogie Down Productions, Boyz II Men, Butchy B, Clive "Kool Herc" Campbell, Common, De La Soul, Doug E. Fresh & The Get Fresh Crew, Eric B & Rakim, Grandmaster Flash (and the Furious Five), Grand Wizzard Theodore, Guy, Ice T, Isley Brothers, Janet Jackson, Juice Crew, KC and the Sunshine Band, Keith Sweat, Kurtis Blow, LL Cool J, MC Lyte, MC Shan, Marvin Gaye, Michael Jackson, Musical Youth, N.W.A., New Edition, Prince and the Revolution, Princessa, Public Enemy, Queen Latifah, Rick James, Roxanne Shante, Rick James, Run DMC, Salt-N-Pepa, Sister Souljah, Sugarhill Gang, Sylvia Robinson, The Fat Boys, The Sequence, Tina Turner and Whodini.

Chapter 3 (1985 - 1990)

Genres:
Rap

Artists:
A Tribe Called Quest, Afrika Bambaataa, Big Daddy Kane, Black Sheep, Body & Soul, Boogie Down Productions, Brand Nubian, Def Jef, De La Soul, Digital Underground, D-Nice, DJ Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince, DOC, Doug E. Fresh & The Get Fresh Crew, Eazy E, Eric B & Rakim, Fresh Prince & DJ Jazzy Jeff, Grandmaster Flash, Heavy D, Ice T, JJ Fadd, Johnny Gill, Jungle Brothers, Just-Ice, Karyn White, Kid 'N' Play, King Tee, Kool Moe Dee, KRS-One, Kurtis Blow, LL Cool J, MC Hammer, MC Lyte, Michel'le, Monie Love, Ms. Melodie, Native Tongues, NWA, Oaktown's 3-5-7, Paris, Poor Righteous Teachers, Public Enemy, Queen Latifah, Rhyme Syndicate Posse, Run DMC, Salt-N-Pepa,

Schooly D, Slick Rick, Stetsasonic, Sugarhill Gang, The Fat Boys, The Sequence, Tone Loc, Whodini, X-Clan and Young MC.

Chapter 4 (1989 - 1994)

Genres:
Rap and Hokum Blues

Artists:
2 Live Crew, Anquette, Body Count, Ice Cube, Ice T, N.W.A. and Sister Souljah.

Chapter 5 (1993 - 1995)

Genres:
Rap

Artists:
2Pac, 7th Ambassador, Afrika Bambaataa, Big Daddy Kane, Black Wine, Bogus, Boogie Down Productions, B.O.N.E Thugs-N-Harmony, Brand Nubian, Brooklyn Zu, Buju Banton, C-No Gee, Channel Live, Christopher Williams, Chubb Rock, Chuck D, Cold 187um, Coldcrush Brothers, Color Me Badd, Compton's Most Wanted, Crazy Tee, Curtis Mayfield, Da Lench Mob, DA Smart, Danny Madden, Dionne Warwick, DJ Quik, Doug E. Fresh, Dr. Dre, Dramacydal, Earth Wind and Fire, E. Rule, Essence, Force One Network, F.S. Effect, Grandmaster Flash, Grandwizard Theodore, Guru, Guy, Hi-Five, Ice Cube, Ice T, Insane, Isaac Hayes, J.F.N., Johnny Gill, KAM, Kaotic Sypher, Keith Sweat, KK, Kenya Gruv, Kevie Kev Rockwell, Killah Priest, Kokane, Kool Herc, LeVert, Lord Jamar, Main Source, MC Eiht, MC Lyte, Melquan, Merchant, Mobb Deep, Monie Love, Mz. Kilo, Notorious B.I.G, Pete Rock & CL Smooth, P.I Crazee, Prince Ital Joe, Queen Latifah, Quincy Jones, RZA, Shorty, Smooth B, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Spice 1, Stanley Clarke, Step X Step, Stretch, Sunz of Man, Tevin Campbell, The Alkaholiks, The Cutthroats, Tone Def Clicc, Tone! Toni! Tone!, Too $hort, Top Authority, Tragedy the Intelligent Hoodlum, Troop, True, UGK, Val Young, Whoodini, Wise Intelligent, X-Niggaz and Yo Yo.

Epilogue (21st century)

Genres:
Rap

Artists:
Childish Gambino, Grandmaster Flash and Kendrick Lamar.

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